INDIAN HORIZONS

VOL.38 1989 G. K. V. Hardwar

028105

078105

078105

34
C.

[illegible]

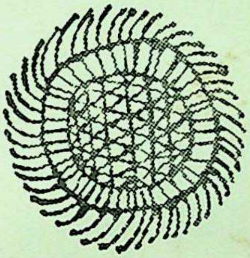
17/8/90

VOLUME XXXVIII
NUMBERS 1–2 1989

Indian Horizons

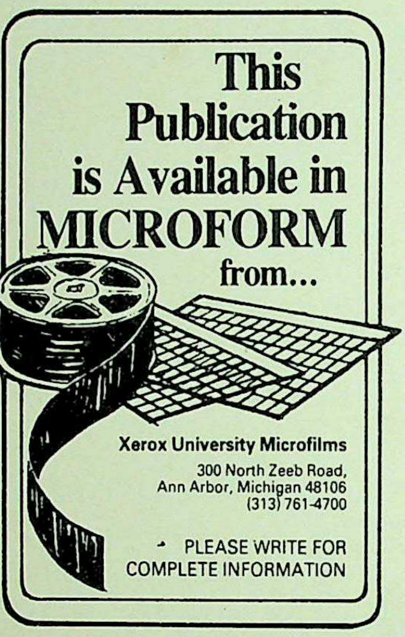
S. Gopal
Nehru and Secularism
Francois Mitterrand
Honouring Satyajit Ray
Nirmal Verma
The Future of Literary Communication
Donald H. Bishop
Radhakrishnan's Religious Pluralism
Sisirkumar Ghose
Overtures to the Great Unknown
Sudhir Chandra
Literature and Social Change
Satyajit Ray
The Suspicions of Mr. Sadhan
Bhisham Sahni
The Mausoleum
Nayantara Sahgal
Earthly Love
Sharat Kumar
The Accident
Susan Visvanathan
Lukose's Church
M.F. Husain
Illustrations
Book Reviews

VOLUME XXXVIII
NUMBERS 1-2 1989



indian horizons

INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS
NEW DELHI



This Publication is Available in MICROFORM from...

Xerox University Microfilms
300 North Zeeb Road,
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
(313) 761-4700

PLEASE WRITE FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION

SUBSCRIPTIONS

	Single Issue	Annual Subscription	Three-year Subscription
Rs.	5.00	20.00	50.00
£	1.00	4.00	10.00
$	2.50	10.00	25.00

Printed at: Indraprastha Press (C.B.T.),
4, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,
Nehru House, New Delhi-110002.

Printed and published by Lalit Mansingh, Director-General, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002.

International Standard Serial Number: II
ISSN 0019-7203

Cover: Kanti Roy

INDIAN HORIZONS

is a quarterly journal of Indian culture and arts, and of cultural relations—past and present—between India and the world. Incorporating and descended from *Indo-Asian Culture*, founded in 1952 by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, it is one of six periodicals published quarterly by the Council, in five languages. The others are *Africa Quarterly*, *Gaganachal* (Hindi), *Papeles de la India* (Spanish), *Rencontre avec l'inde* (French), and *Thaqafat-ul-Hind* (Arabic).

The Council's publication programme, which takes in publication of books in English and foreign languages, is part of a large effort for strengthening cultural ties between India and the world, and thereby promoting mutual understanding, with which object the Council was founded in 1950. It is an autonomous agency of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Contributions are cordially invited. Manuscripts for consideration may please be sent in duplicate—typed with double spacing, with a minimum of footnotes, with line-drawings, if necessary to—*The Editor, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002.*

Correspondence regarding subscription and payment may also be addressed to the Editor. The subscription rates alongside apply only to *Indian Horizons* and *Gaganachal*. The Spanish, French and Arabic Quarterlies are non-priced.

The opinions stated or implied in *Indian Horizons* are those of its contributors and are not necessarily representative of Council policy. All writings and graphic matter published in the journal, except where otherwise attributed, are copyright and may not be reproduced without permission.

All illustrations are covered by copyright and may not be reproduced in any form without the prior permission of the artist and the publisher.

Editor: A Srinivasan

S. Gopal 1
Nehru and Secularism

Francois Mitterrand 9
Honouring Satyajit Ray

Nirmal Verma 11
The Future of Literary Communication

Donald H. Bishop 19
Radhakrishnan's Religious Pluralism

Sisirkumar Ghose 35
Overtures to the Great Unknown

Sudhir Chandra 45
Literature and Social Change

Satyajit Ray 53
The Suspicions of Mr. Sadhan

Bhisham Sahni 61
The Mausoleum

Nayantara Sahgal 69
Earthly Love

Sharat Kumar 77
The Accident

Susan Visvanathan 83
Lukose's Church

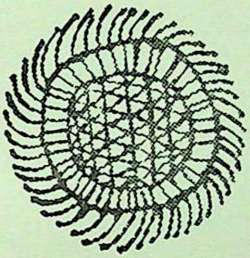
M.F. Husain
Illustrations on pages 18, 34, 52, 60 and 88

Book Reviews 89

CONTRIBUTORS to this issue

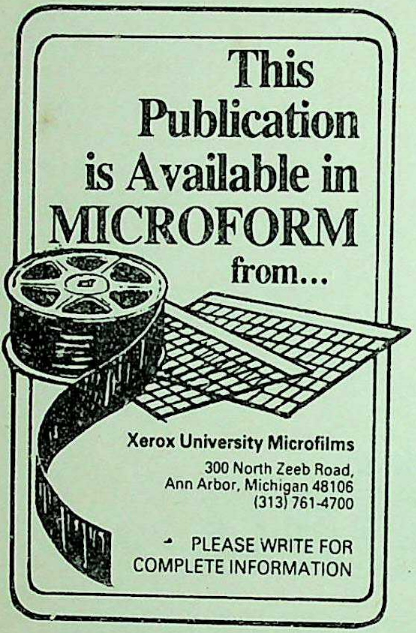
S. Gopal
Historian and General Editor of *The Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru.*
Francois Mitterrand
President of France.
Nirmal Verma
Novelist, critic, story writer and winner of the Sahitya Akademi (National Academy of Letters) Award.
Donald H. Bishop
Author and Professor of Philosophy at the Washington State University.
Sisirkumar Ghose
Author, formerly Professor of English at Santiniketan and contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on mysticism.
Sudhir Chandra
Author and Professor of History; was visiting Fellow at Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, France.
Satyajit Ray
One of the greatest directors in the world of cinema, story writer and graphic artist.
Bhisham Sahni
Novelist, story writer and winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award.
Nayantara Sahgal
Novelist, story writer and winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award.
Sharat Kumar
Novelist and story writer.
Susan Visvanathan
Story writer and sociologist.
G. Venkataraman
Journalist, formerly Director of the National Book Trust.
Sunil Kothari
Author and Professor and Head of the Department of Dance, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta.
S.C. Malik
Noted anthropologist and scholar with several publications to his credit; his most recent publiction is *Modern Civilization: A Crisis of Fragmentation.*
Muriel Wasi
Novelist, critic, broadcaster and educationist.
Sandhya Rao
Freelance journalist.
M.F. Husain
One of the world's most eminent living artists.

VOLUME XXXVIII
NUMBERS 3–4 1989



indian horizons

INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS
NEW DELHI



This Publication is Available in MICROFORM from...

Xerox University Microfilms
300 North Zeeb Road,
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
(313) 761-4700

PLEASE WRITE FOR
COMPLETE INFORMATION

SUBSCRIPTIONS

	Single Issue	Annual Subscription	Three-year Subscription
Rs.	5.00	20.00	50.00
£	1.00	4.00	10.00
$	2.50	10.00	25.00

Printed at: Indraprastha Press (C.B.T.),
4, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,
Nehru House, New Delhi-110002.

Printed and published by Lalit Mansingh, Director-General, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002.

International Standard Serial Number: II
ISSN 0019-7203

Cover: Kanti Roy

INDIAN HORIZONS

is a quarterly journal of Indian culture and arts, and of cultural relations—past and present—between India and the world. Incorporating and descended from *Indo-Asian Culture*, founded in 1952 by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, it is one of six periodicals published quarterly by the Council, in five languages. The others are *Africa Quarterly*, *Gagananchal* (Hindi), *Papeles de la India* (Spanish), *Rencontre avec l'inde* (French), and *Thaqafat-ul-Hind* (Arabic).

The Council's publication programme, which takes in publication of books in English and foreign languages, is part of a large effort for strengthening cultural ties between India and the world, and thereby promoting mutual understanding, with which object the Council was founded in 1950. It is an autonomous agency of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Contributions are cordially invited. Manuscripts for consideration may please be sent in duplicate—typed with double spacing, with a minimum of footnotes, with line-drawings, if necessary to—*The Editor, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002.*

Correspondence regarding subscription and payment may also be addressed to the Editor. The subscription rates alongside apply only to *Indian Horizons* and *Gaganachal*. The Spanish, French and Arabic Quarterlies are non-priced.

The opinions stated or implied in *Indian Horizons* are those of its contributors and are not necessarily representative of Council policy. All writings and graphic matter published in the journal, except where otherwise attributed, are copyright and may not be reproduced without permission.

All illustrations are covered by copyright and may not be reproduced in any form without the prior permission of the artist and the publisher.

Editor: A Srinivasan

Krishna Chaitanya 1
Musings on Peter Brook's Mahabharata Film

Craig Raine 13
A Poetic Testament

Paul Jacob 17
A Revision of Indian Theatre

Baldev Singh 27
Self-Reliance and Technology

Subhashini Aryan 45
Wall Paintings of North India

U.R. Anantha Murthy 55
The Still One

Ramakant 71
Karl, the Darkie's Box

M.F. Husain
Illustrations on pages 12, 16, 26, 54 and 108

Book Reviews 87

CONTRIBUTORS to this issue

Krishna Chaitanya
Historian of literature and art critic; has published, among several works a ten-volume history of world literature and histories of Sanskrit drama and Indian painting
Craig Raine
Poet and poetry editor in a publishing firm in U.K.
Paul Jacob
Poet, theatre critic, translator and journalist
Baldev Singh
Professorial Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library
Subhashini Aryan
Educationist and freelance writer
U.R. Anantha Murthy
Novelist and short story writer; at present Vice-Chancellor of the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala
Ramakant
Short story writer
Saroj Merani
Freelance writer
S.C. Malik
A noted anthropologist and scholar who has a number of publications to his credit
Rakshat Puri
Poet, literary critic and journalist
Muriel Wasi
Novelist, critic, broadcaster and educationist
M.F. Husain
One of the world's most eminent living artists.

Nehru and Secularism

S. Gopal

Nehru's understanding of secularism was derived from no dictionary and based on no borrowed ideology.* It was, as with so much else in his thinking, a product of personal attitudes, historical circumstances and compulsions of policy. A conventional believer in his youth and early middle age, he was transformed, under the influence of Bertrand Russell and Marxism, by the mid-twenties, into a severe critic of organized, institutional religion; and the communal riotings in India reinforced this aversion. Even on the personal side he at this time felt no commitment and he liked to describe himself as a pagan. But extensive reading in Indian philosophy during the three years from 1942 in Ahmednagar fort brought him round to sympathetic appreciation of the Upanisads, the Gita and Buddhism. In 1958, for example, writing generally of the problems facing the world, he concluded with the remark, "Perhaps we might keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life-force which is the inner base of everything that exists." Then again, just two days before his death, he wrote in a preface to a book on planning that in benefiting from modern technical processes "we must not forget that the essential obective to be aimed at is the quality of the individual and the concept of *dharma* underlying it." He was impressed by a remark of Vinoba Bhave that the days of politics and religion had gone and the days of science and spirituality had come—understanding by spirituality the basic values common to the great religions. But the emphasis throughout is on ethics and conduct rather than on doctrine. "I am not exactly a religious person, although I agree with much that religions have to say." By the end Nehru can be described as a reverent agnostic, without religious faith but with a religious feeling, and with a respect for the beliefs of others provided they did not allow these beliefs to intrude into their social behaviour.

To someone with such an outlook, the continuous strengthening of the religious element in Indian politics between the two world wars was bewildering as well as depressing. Nehru knew, of course, the causes that contributed to this: the uneven nature of economic development in and between various parts of India, the advantage taken by the British of the disharmony in Indian society between the Hindus and the Muslims, the Hinduized outlook of Indian nationalism, the concept of Hindus and Muslims co-operating as two separate communities rather than acting together as Indians, the expansion of communal parties as props of political reaction. To counter these developments he incorporated in the resolution on fundamental rights at the Karachi Congress in 1931 clauses asserting that every citizen of India should enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise any religion, subect to public order and morality, that all citizens were equal before the law, irrespective of religion, creed, caste or sex, that no disability attached to citizens for these reasons in regard to public employment and in the exercise of any trade or calling, and that the state should observe neutrality in regard to all religions. This was the first breakdown, in concrete terms, of the concept of secularism in the Indian context and formed the basis of the articles in the Constitution many years later. Once this resolution of 1931 had been passed and the leading political party in India committed to the secular attitude, Nehru thought that logically communalism should become a non-event. The national struggle against the British would then be strengthened by gaining ground on the social and economic fronts. Hunger, poverty and illiteracy had nothing to do with religion and were the common lot of most Indians. So when, from 1937, Jinnah set out to broaden the base of the Muslim League with the claim that Islam was threatened, Nehru responded by promoting a 'mass contact' movement among the Muslims. That campaign failed, for various reasons, to achieve momentum, while the League, with active British support during the war years, gained rapidly in popular backing, with the climax of partition. A dissolution of the communal problem by assuring a secular future for free India and pointing out the present lack of rationale, however impeccable in theory, had no chance in practice in a colonial setting.

---

* This paper was presented by Professor S. Gopal at the Inaugural Session of the Seminar on "Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Quest for a Secular Identity" held under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

It was, however, crucial to ensure that the division of the country was not a death-blow to the idea of secularism. Nehru and the Congress accepted the creation of Pakistan as a political necessity and not as recognition of the validity of the two-nation theory on the basis of religion. Rather, with large religious minorities remaining in India, secularism became all the more important, for it is the only possible basis of a uniform and durable national identity in a multi-religious society. Not opposition to religion but the divorce of religion from politics and public life, the separation of the state from the churches of all faiths, the insistence on religion as a private matter for the individual with no bearing on civic rights and duties, and freedom for the profession of diverse forms of religious worship provided they did not come into conflict with other religions—these are all parts of a civilized outlook, products of scientific, rational thinking. To act in any other way, as Nehru was never tired of repeating, is barbarous and medieval. But the ideal attitude is also in India, the most opportunist policy. Only secularism can be the corner-stone of an egalitarian, forward-looking India, with religious pluralism, full civil liberties and equal opportunities. It is the only possible social cement for a democratic community, the only way to enable unqualified efforts at social and economic betterment. Such striving at secularism colours even foreign policy. Kashmir cannot be transferred to Pakistan merely because there happens to be a Muslim majority in that state. Again, while Nehru was prepared on occasions to accept war with Pakistan on political grounds, he was reluctant to do so in 1950 because at that time the cause seemed to be primarily communal.

Merely to commit India to secularism and enact its essentials in the Constitution was only the beginning of the struggle. The fact of partition and memories of the communal conflicts which came with it could not easily be washed away. The consequent Hindu revivalism created, in Nehru's words, a crisis of the spirit, and to start, as he hoped, a new chapter was not going to be easy. Out of tune with the communal mood which seemed to have general acceptance, Nehru at times considered resignation. "All of us" he wrote sadly, "seem to be getting infected with the refugee mentality or, worse still, the R.S.S. mentality. That is a curious finale to our careers."

Disestablishment of all religions means that none of them can enjoy a privileged relationship with the State; and the Government on their side should not be, or even thought to be, the agents of any type of religious revival. As Prime Minister, Nehru was very correct in this matter. He would not associate himself with any function that had a non-secular tinge, and took care to stress that the involvement of the Government of India in the 2500th anniversary celebrations of the Buddha in 1956 was not sponsorship of Buddhism but recognition of the Buddha as a great Indian. But not all of Nehru's colleagues, even the most senior of them, were as scrupulous in observing the axiom that the State should not promote any particular religion. K.M. Munshi, a member of the Cabinet, was the chief patron and promoter of the rebuilding of the Somnath temple; the Rajpramukh of Saurashtra wrote to Indian embassies abroad to collect waters and twigs and soil; and the Saurashtra Government sanctioned funds for the installation ceremonies. Nehru was even unable to dissuade the President, Dr Prasad, from being present on the occasion, and he thought it prudent not to make it a constitutional issue by directing the President not to go.

"I can assure you," wrote Munshi to Nehru in defence of his conduct, "that the collective subconscious of India today is happier with the scheme of reconstruction of Somnath sponsored by the Government of India than with many other things that we have done and are doing." This was a boast that, despite Nehru's efforts, the sponsors had succeeded in giving an official colouring to the whole project. There is also a flaunting of the undeniable fact that the large majority of the Indian population was Hindu by religion, while secularism was a Western concept. It could, of course, be claimed that Hinduism, by its preaching of tolerance, hospitality and unimportance of dogma, provided, if one may put it paradoxically, a religious basis for secularism. But the theory of Hinduism, magnificent as it is, diverges sharply from its social practices, caste structures, rituals, superstitions, discrimination and inequality. "In practice, the Hindu is certainly not tolerant and is more narrow-minded than almost any person in any other country except the Jews." Nehru was certain that unless this outlook changed radically, India was doomed. The Muslim outlook might often be worse, but it could not make very much difference to the future of India.

The destruction of Hindu communalism and the establishment of a secular state and society were, therefore, vital if India was to survive. Communalism, apart from its narrow and limited vision, was a cloak for reaction in all forms; and the communalism of the majority community, which was able to disguise itself as nationalism, was in fact the Indian version of fascism. To bring religion into politics meant the ruin of both. Throughout his Prime Ministership, except for a few months at the time of the Telengana rebellion when he saw nothing to choose between communism in its violent phase and communalism, Nehru was never in doubt that Hindu political resurgence was the primary threat to a modern, democratic India. This was at the root of many of his actions. If, for example, he unfailingly stood up for Partap Singh Kairon although he had full knowledge of Kairon's weaknesses, it was because he regarded Kairon as non-communal and resisting both an increasingly aggressive Sikh communalism and the efforts of the Arya Samaj to interfere in Punjab politics.

Just as revivalism among the Hindus was the greatest danger, so also, in Nehru's view, it was the prime responsibility of the Hindus to provide the religious minorities with a sense of security. In particular, it was for the Hindus to make the large number of Muslims in India feel at home and not see themselves as second-class citizens existing on sufferance. There might be a few Muslims who were communal and out to make mischief; and they would have to be dealt with sternly.

But most Muslims in India were, after partition, down-and-out and, if communal, only so on the defensive. It served no purpose to question their loyalty which was a natural growth of circumstances and could not be produced to order. Winning the Muslims over was a problem of social psychology and one which had to be handled by the majority community. They should treat the minorities as a trust rather than as extraneous elements to be crushed or appeased. The test of success is not what the majority community thinks but how the minority community feels. Full scope for the minorities is as important a criterion of a working democracy as the effective rule of the majority. A sense of grievance on the side of the minorities demands self-examination by the majority. From the time he gave serious thought to this question he was of the unshaken view that it was for the Hindus to take the initiative and be generous. There might be some justification for the minorities to be communal; there was none for the majority. "Honest communalism is fear; false communalism is political reactions." It was for the Hindus to be secular and thereby help the Muslims and other minorities to become secular.

The problem of the Christian minority was relatively simple. Christianity came to India long before the European powers and is one of the ancient religions of the country. While, during the *raj,* Nehru shared the feeling that Christianity and imperialism often became partners, after 1947 he opposed any hindrance to the practice and propagation of the Christian religion. There was no need to be frightened of evangelical work, and Christians should not get the impression that they were being suppressed in any way. This, apart from being retrograde and weakening the confidence of a substantial section of the population, worked against the government's policies to integrate the Naga areas and consolidate popular support in Goa. He repeatedly pulled up the government of Madhya Pradesh for seeming to be anti-Christian and to be concerned with the matter of conversions even as later, in 1959 and 1962, he publicly disapproved of the interventions of the Christian clergy in the politics of Kerala.

There was a special problem with foreign missionaries. Their number nearly doubled soon after 1947. In particular, many American missionaries arrived, projecting, in Nehru's words, "quietly or aggressively" the American viewpoint in politics and spreading out among the villages. Worrying to Nehru and the Government was the activity of foreign priests in the north-east areas, for they were reported to be fostering ideas of independence and advising the local Christians to keep aloof from the rest of India. Varrier Elwin, himself a clergyman and Nehru's chief adviser in these matters, spoke of a 'Christian Mahasabha' being formed. So it was a problem not of missionaries who were foreigners but of foreigners who, though missionaries, were participants in non-religious and anti-national activity. Nehru's approach to the issue was to deal with the principal missionary institutions in India and abroad rather than with individuals, and to grant visas liberally to doctors, nurses and specialists. Such missionaries as were asked to leave or were turned away had such action taken on specific political grounds and not because of any general antipathy to their evangelical activity. Here again, this was not an attitude shared by all those around him; and Nehru had to remind President Prasad that, as the symbol of the secular state, he should not have permitted the holding in Rashtrapati Bhavan of a conference where missionaries were generally criticized.

Size and history had made the problem of integrating the Muslims more complicated. Aspects of Nehru's policy in this respect were to give special attention to the recruitment of Muslims in adequate numbers to the armed and civil services, and particularly the police, and to encourage their employment in the private sector. He took much interest in individual cases if they came up before him, and in March 1958 directed the Chief Ministers to send him quarterly reports of official recruitment, particularly when this was done without examinations. Knowing also that Urdu, while not a monopoly of the Muslims, was a language to which they attached much importance, Nehru pressed on his colleagues, especially in Delhi and the United Provinces, to give the promotion of Urdu special consideration. Urdu belonged more to the United Provinces than to the whole of Pakistan and, if the language were denied its due, Muslims would begin to feel that they were losing the symbols of their community and there was no honourable place for them in India. So this was more than a matter of language. The peaceful and co-operative existence between the communities within the country, such as India so vigorously advocated abroad, required that the communities should be encouraged to feel that they lived as equals.

Yet it must be said that there are certain steps which, under pressure of circumstances, Nehru took or failed to take, which do not fit squarely with his promotion of secularism as the root of equality and the basis of democracy. Special treatment of minorities is in itself a weakening of the secular ideal. If caste, as Nehru said, is a violation of secularism, so is reservation of seats for particular castes. But this can be explained as temporary measures to remedy long-standing injustices, although Nehru would have preferred affirmative action of different kinds. Reservation by itself perpetuated division and confirmed lower status and standards.

Then there was the question of communal political parties. In 1948 Nehru committed the support of the Government to a resolution in the Constituent Assembly calling for the ban of such parties. This is an obvious aspect of secularism. As the State does not interfere with religions, so religious organizations should not interfere in politics; nor should religious grounds be postulated for political actions. But this resolution has not been implemented. In 1961 he directed the Law Ministry to examine the matter and was told that it was difficult to define communal parties and any such attempt might be questioned as an infringement of fundamental rights.

The banning of cow-slaughter was also a matter in which Nehru failed to act according to his convictions. He had always been opposed to such a ban. In 1923, as Mayor of Allahabad, he guided the Municipal Board to reject a suggestion to prohibit cow-slaughter. In August 1947, when Rajendra Prasad was willing to consider sympathetically an immediate ban on cow-slaughter as symbolic of the attainment of freedom, Nehru unhesitatingly refused. This issue was an aspect of the general problem of the breeding of quality cattle and had to be considered as an economic matter. He also took his stand with Gandhi that the compulsory stoppage of cow-slaughter, taken as an isolated decision, would be regarded as a concession to Hindu feeling and therefore to be avoided in a composite country with a composite culture. He went even further than Gandhi and disclaimed any special sentiment for the cow. He was bold enough to declare once that he valued the cow as he valued the horse. A general concern for animal welfare was far more important than any particular measure to prevent the killing of cattle. Yet he did not oppose the listing of the banning of cow-slaughter as one of the directive principles of State policy in the Constitution. All he did was to ensure that nothing came of it in practice. He told the Chief Ministers that if there were to be any legislation it should be limited to cows and calves; but even this he discouraged and suggested alternative measures to protect and improve the quality of the breed. Any general ban on cow-slaughter would probably result in the best cattle being killed and the poorest being protected. It would also flare up as a political issue in north-eastern India, where beef-eating had become an act of defiance. These were all valid arguments which highlighted the error of mentioning the ban in the directive principles.

An even greater inadequacy in Nehru's implementation of secular principles was his restriction of the insistence on monogamy to Hindu men and the grant of the rights of divorce and inheritance only to Hindu women. In his keenness to win the confidence of the Muslim community, he failed to provide equality before the law to all Indian women and to promulgate a common civil law. But there is no room in a secular society for inequalities which claim religious sanction. Religion has to be separated not only from politics but also from the law. To deny rights to Muslim women which are available to women of other faiths is a violation of the provision in the Constitution that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion. The Constituent Assembly had declined, by a resolution in 1948, to accept that Muslim personal law was an inseparable part of the Islamic religion and rejected attempts to exempt it from the directive principle regarding a uniform civil code. Nehru, of course, knew all this but felt that the time had not yet come to impose in this matter on Muslims decisions taken by what would necessarily be a non-Muslim majority. A start should be made with the Hindu code, thereby preparing the ground for the extension of its principles to all Indian women. But what Nehru postponed in the fifties has now become even more difficult.

Secularism is more than laws, concessions and special considerations. It is a state of mind, at best almost an instinctive feeling. Such a sense of solidarity and partnership , enveloping all the citizens of India irrespective of their personal religions, was not pervasive in India despite all Nehru's efforts as Prime Minister. He had hoped that the police action in Hyderabad might improve the atmosphere and promote emotional integration; but this expectation proved to be short-lived. Communal rioting occurred throughout the fifties and even increased during the early sixties; and Nehru confessed that a sense of darkness was creeping over him. These were regular reminders of what seemed to be a basic hostility between certain sections of the people which surfaced at the slightest provocation. Perhaps, to deal with this, instead of dealing with specific issues, greater attention should have been given to the spread of education. A secular state can be strongly founded only in a secular society; and this implies leading the people out of social backwardness and toning up their outlook. Nehru believed that as the economic condition of the people improved, religion would cease to be important in public life and recede into the background. He saw an example in Europe, where the wards of religion, so prominent in the sixteenth century, were rendered irrelevant by the advance of the economy. But even more important in India is the solvent of education. An educated democracy is synonymous with a secular society, overcoming communalism both of reaction and of fear. It is because we have failed to strengthen the human factor that the problems which Nehru faced are still with us. But one should end on Nehru's habitual note of optimism. "India," he wrote to the Nawab of Bhopal on 9 July 1948, "can only become great if she preserves that composite culture which she had developed through the ages. Doubts sometimes assail me as to whether this is going to happen; and yet at the back of my mind I feel sure that whatever might happen in the present, sometime or other India will have to tread that path to self-realization and greatness."

Honouring Satyajit Ray

Francois Mitterrand

France's visit to India today* is not only dictated by the desire of the Governments of our two nations to exchange their views on important world matters, or to reinforce their cooperation. It originates from a deeper sentiment, one which I strongly feel at the moment, which is the desire to maintain the bond of friendship between human minds. This friendship binds out two nations since a very long time; it enables them, despite distances and historical misfortunes, to preserve a remarkable cultural dialogue.

On the second day of this only too short visit to India, it gives me great pleasure to be here, in Calcutta, the home of the Bengali renaissance, the centre of the cultural and intellectual development of the Indian Union. It is an even greater pleasure to find myself in the company of some of the most brilliant minds, some of the greatest talents of present-day India, to honour at their side one of the most fascinating artists of these times.

In this age of cinema, in this country which has the largest film industry in the world, you, Mr. Satyajit Ray, emerged from the very beginning as one of the best. "Pather Panchali" (Song of the Road), your first work in 1955 revealed to Bengal, to India and to the entire world that Tagore had an heir capable of expressing—through the writing of a new period, which is that of images—the sensitivity to which the founder of Santiniketan has already acquainted us.

You do not reject the influence of the Master to whom you paid a brilliant tribute a few years later, but you transform it, going beyond it and reaching your own personal vision which, in work after work, affirms its uniqueness and widens its ambitions. You draw from the literary treasures of the Bengali renaissance; the works of Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyaya, Tarashankar Bandopadhyaya, Narendranath Mitra and Tagore himself. You work on them, transforming everything, the script, the production, the setting, the music, to create an entirely new and personal work of art. Realistic and sometimes even cruel (for which you are blamed by some) in the description of agonized humans, in the perception of the distress or the pathetic joy of poor people, you are a moralist and in a certain manner religious through your portrayal of the vertigoes of the human soul, always tempted to slip towards decay and still in the quest of its salvation, but so lyrical through the use of symbols, namely that of white and black—served by outstanding photography—that of the river or the mountain, the child and his mother—an image with which anyone can relate or at least see in it the relation which binds India to its children everywhere on earth.

---

* Based on the text of the speech delivered by President Francois Mitterrand when conferring the Legion of Honour on Satyajit Ray. (Translated from the French).

The aim of this speech is to pay homage to all of India through the person of Mr. Ray, because a large part of Mr. Ray's work, be it "The Music Room", "Mir Mirza" or "The Chess Players"—which illustrates a page of Indian history which they (the players) alone don't want to turn— has themes relating to the history of humanity.

This is the personification of the nostalgia found in societies and cultures which turn a blind eye to the fact that they are dying. This is how Maupassant's or Zola's charcters remain engraved in our memories; Charulata, Amal and Bhupati continue to live in the Calcutta of their time. The struggle of the Bengalis which strives to re-emerge, and the intimate drama which tears them apart is shared by the characters of "A Part of the Countryside" and "The Rule of the Game". The loneliness of Pikoo waiting beside his telephone, searching, in the midst of the milling crowds and the solitude of Calcutta, for a warm voice and a close friend, is the loneliness experienced by children all over the world in the face of crushing truths.

By decorating you today, dear Maestro, not only is France paying homage to a very important film-maker and friend, but it, above all, wishes to express its gratitude to a creator who, by settling in that part of the world which is truly his own, acts as a witness for others. This large country shelters many talents. It possesses a creative force which merits many other encounters, elsewhere, with other artists and writers, but we considered that Satyajit Ray was representative of a great moment of Indian culture and of the entire universal creation. This is why I now have the pleasure of awarding you the Legion of Honour in the name of France.

The Future of Literary Communication

Nirmal Verma

Perhaps more than any other art, literature demands an involvement, which is not merely confined to aesthetic experience. Being totally committed to the word, it can never afford to be self-contained to a degree to which music can be; the word, by its very nature completes itself in the other. And yet it contains within itself an experience which is unique. This imposes a peculiar tension in a literary work, which resorts to commonly used words in order to convey the uniquely felt experience.

Indeed, even earlier, writers must have felt such a tension, for it has never been easy to transform the amorphous world of feeling into a coherent and concrete act of expression. But it was not a problem external to the writer's world; if anything, it was an integral aspect of the struggle which he carried on with himself and with the language in which he worked. As a consequence, what was created as a work of art, was the product of a unique sensibility and consciousness, and yet at the same time, it was embedded in a language, which already assumed a collective and *spontaneous* participation.

I emphasize the word spontaneous, because it was very different from the deliberate, and conscious attempts which are made in our time to 'invite' the audience participation in the theatre or poetry-reading; indeed much of the pulp, popular literature goes out of the way to cater to such a participation. Such attempts seem artificial because instead of bridging the gulf which has opened up between the artist and the audience, they simply seek to gloss it over through certain slick, populist devices. It becomes difficult to demarcate the area of commercial self-interest from the pseudo-radical demagogy of 'people art'—for both appeal not to the distinctively unique experiences of the individual, but the faceless mass of average units euphemistically called, the 'audience' or the 'people', depending upon the social system we are living in.

Such is the peculiar dilemma of the modern artist; while the avenues of communicaton have widened as never before, the very means through which the widening process has been fecilitated, popular education, the mass media of newspapers and television, has created a situation, where any meaningful communication between the artist and his audience has become increasingly difficult. In a modern technological society, where political jargon and journalistic cliche dominate the daily experience of man, the area of the unique has been more or less submerged by the monolithic domination of the average.

The average can only survive by being parasitic on the extremities of emotions or experiences, through which each man strives to realise the authenticity of his existence. To be authentic is to refuse to be submerged by the average and the uniform and be uniquely oneself–in relation to the other. It is, precisely here, in the area stretching between the unique sensibility of the artist and the individual response of the reader or viewer, that the problem of communication acquires crucial importance. To communicate without compromising the authenticity of one's vision, to respond without debasing one's sensibility—these are the questions which disturb or ought to disturb the custodians of culture.

The situation, at present, however, is very different. While the artist enjoys the formal freedom to communicate whatever he likes, and the people are free to receive whatever they wish to both the artist and his audience are subject to pressures, which distort the content of their freedom. An artist is of course free to create—but when he looks at his audience, he finds to his discomfiture, that it is nothing but an extraction of the average, a mass of readers or viewers, who are largely unaware of what they need, or what they aspire to—in short, what exactly is the nature of their desire? The Western sociologists tend to sidetrack the whole problem by calling this mass of audience the consumers of culture; we are all consumers in one way or the other, the disturbing phenomenon, however, is that what we consume—whether it is a painting or a toothpaste—is not essentially related to what we *are*, but to what we have been told what we *need* and there is no innate connection between what we *need* and what we *are*. The consumer is unaware of his needs precisely because he is unaware of *himself*. Not that a person's hunger for art is unreal, but there is no guarantee, that what would be 'provided' as a means to satisfy this hunger would be authentic. Most probably it would not be authentic, beacuse no means are available to the audience to control the means themselves; and this is not surprising, for means are essentially related to ends—and for people, ignorant of the ends of life, any means are good enough which could give them a temporary escape from life.

Here it is futile to make a distinction between the elitistic intelligentsia, what reads the 'quality papers' and the 'vulgar' mass of readers which go for the yellow press—for in the ultimate analysis, both are passive recipients of what is *given* to them, not the active choosers of what they wish to have. Actually, in our society, the elite and vulgar happen to be two sides of the same coin, their needs are governed not by the innate and inner need, which implies a degree of self-awareness, but by pressures outside themselves, over which they have no control. It is no wonder that writers like Standhal wrote only for the 'chosen few', who didn't belong to either of these categories.

But it is precisely this segmentation of culture in our times, which puts the greatest strain on the problem of art-communication. The question, "for whom am I writing?" which Tolstoy asked himself with such anguish and urgency, would have been inconceivable in earlier times, where the barriers between low and high, between popular and elite had not become insurmountable. It would have been difficult to decide, to which category Homer or Shakespeare or for that matter, our own medieval Bhakti poets would have belonged. Not that the classes and divisions didn't exist, but there were experiences, visions and insights of a Kabir here or a St. Francis there, which filtering through the barriers of 'high and low cultures' affected the entire ethos of society. Despite the primitive means of communication and absolute lack of mass media, the artist still succeeded in communicating the magic of his word; and this was made possible by the common memory and association of the past, which the word evoked, and in which both the artist and the audience equally shared.

I think this rupture between the individual vision and the common experience, so characteristic of technological and semi-technological societies is a crucial factor which underlines the alienated state of the present-day artist; with all the means of mass communicaton available to him, he lacks the common point of reference, through which he could have any lively dialogue with the rest of the community. Perhaps it is an inevitable consequence of a technological society, where taste itself has become an attribute of a class which is not shared by other groups. Indeed, within the class itself, the individuals have no common criterion to define their specific experiences and are forced to fit their distinctive responses within the average pattern of social behaviour. Thus we have anonymous and autonomous island of audiences whose experience on one hand is uniform, and on the other, unsharable.

The situation is not free from irony; in a society, where the experiences of each individual are more or less uniform, the problem of communication need not be resolved, it simply withers away. When all the experiences are the same—or fragmented by impenetrable barriers—the need to communicate disappears. The moment, an experience loses its uniqueness, it belongs to all, and belongs to no one. The artist's isolation from the community ceases to be a matter of concern or anguish, which needs to be resolved or overcome; on the contrary it is accepted as something inherent in the nature of things.

It is against such a 'nature of things' that artists like Flaubert in the late 19th century so sharply and yet so helplessly reacted. Flaubert was the first in the long series of 'self-exiled' artists in the modern tradition, before the terms became an apologist cliche in our time. For him, however, self-exile was not a matter of free choice, but a necessary evil, from which there was no escape. Flaubert chose solitude, not because he wanted to write for his own pleasure, but because he had no faith in the taste of the class, which took pleasure in reading his books. He believed in the communicability of the word, but he wasn't quite certain that the society in which he lived, merchants, manufacturers and middle-class snobs, would hear the same word which he wished to communicate. I deliberately chose the example of Flaubert, becasue he, more than any other writer, marks the historical moment indicating the crisis of literary communication in Western society. It coincided with the advent of the 'mass audience' from which the artist found himself completely alienated. He chose to be anything—a rebel, a recluse, or a dandy— but under no circumstances, a person desirous to communicate with such an audience. It was not even an 'audience' but a crowd without a face, an ugly growth of modern cities, which in our time, has acquired monstrous proportions.

In this context, it would not be irrelevant to add, that the term 'people' used in the so-called socialist societies has the same faceless nullity about it as the crowd in Western societies—both tend to transform the flesh-and-blood individuals into a shadowy mass of units, capable of being manipulated either by the state or by the market. Language plays a corrupting role in this process of manipulation and as a sort of nemesis gets corrupted itself. There were young German poets who, after the Second World War, found it extremely painful to communicate in a language which was so ruthlessly mutilated by the Nazi propaganda; but similar assults on langauge have been committed in other countries—albeit in a more subtle manner. One can easily witness the devastation of a city after a bombardment, but to witness the ruins of a language caused by ideological warfare, one needs the sensitive eye of a poet who deals with words. Stones and bricks can be gathered again to build new houses, but to recover a language from the carnage of lies and deceptions, something more is required to restructure the very foundations of our civilization.

We are, thus, entrapped in a vicious circle; both the writer and his readers come into contact with a stultified language which can reflect only the most superficial and generalized aspect of life; a devaluation of human experience, which leads further to the impoverishment of language. The so-called communication-gap between the writer and reader has arisen not becasue the writer has become esoteric and the reader less sensitive, but because in their daily transactions with life both are forced to use a language marked by uniformly standarised experience—an experience comprehensible to all but devoid of any meaning and valid for no one. Thousands of words are daily used in the newspapers, popular magazines, radio and television; we are flooded with information, news and facts from all sides; everything is there to 'help' man to understand himself and others—and yet paradoxically, what has happened is just the opposite; in the real sense, man has become less communicative (except with his psychiatrist), more estranged from others than ever before, passive and lonesome amd less sure of himself. There are vast areas of silence and solitude which seem to be closed to all communication.

Modern literature, in its most significant moments, has attempted to do precisely this—to create works of art which could embody within themselves the territory of non-communicable experience. No experience which is authentic is, however, totally uncommunicable; but then no work of art is totally communicable which attempts to be authentic. Thus a modern writer is forced to make an extremely paradoxical choice—to instil the deepest and most truthful meaning into the word at the risk of minimum communicability or achieve maximum communicability by devalueing the integrity of the word.

Such a suicidal choice, the choice between meaning and communication, seems to be the most remarkable phenomenon of the modern technological age. In the countries of the so-called third world, where the traditional moves and modes of life are not yet totally disrupted by the onslaughts of modernity , the artist relates himself—or used to relate himself till recently—to his audience, on an entirely different basis. In a society unified by a common cultural memory, the word is used not merely as a means or a vehicle to carry over the meaning to the other person, but it is identifiable with the meaning itself. Communicability ceases to be a problem where both the writer and his reader are imbued with an experience which has roots in a unified cultural consciousness. Language does not establish an understanding among persons, but illuminates the understanding which is already present among them. And it is from this lighted area of relationship, that a metaphor flowers—containing the specific and absolute within its structure. A metaphor does not communicate, it invokes; it initiates the writer and the audience into the common celebration of the word.

In a modern technological society, however, it is precisely this metaphorical potency of the word, which is subverted. Instead of being a bearer of a memory, it merely becomes a vehicle for information which is related to the most superficial and pragmatic aspects of our experience. This creates a strange paradox: language, when used as a mere means of communication not merely undermines the metaphorical potentialities of the word, but it ultimately, destroys the very efficacy of communication itself. It is not surprising that some of the major writers and poets of our time have tried to revive and revitalise the exhausted sources of language by probing into the myths, symbols and memories of their past which encompass the deepest and most authentic experience of the entire community.

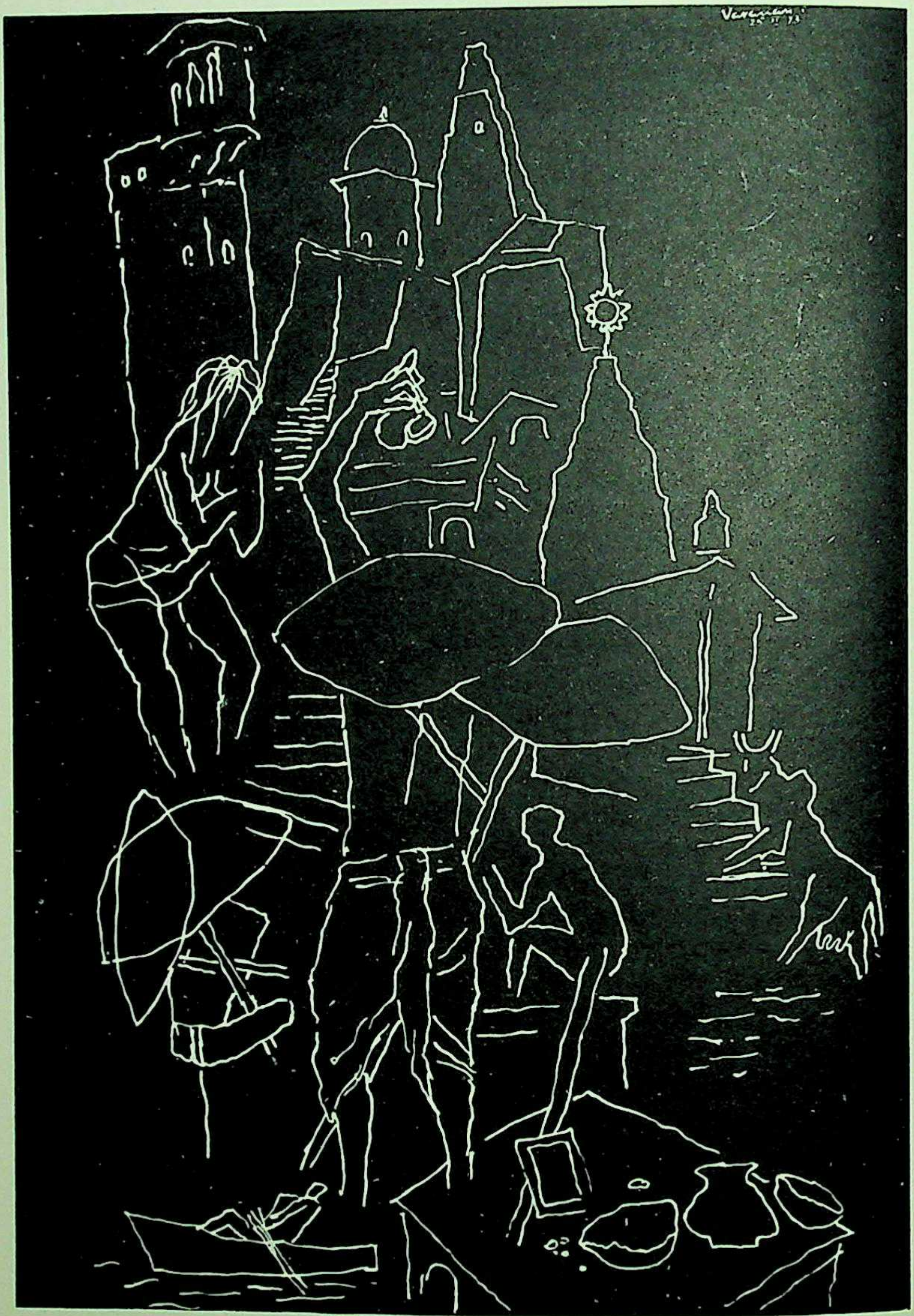
What then should a writer do to escape from the world of corrupted meanings and an illusory audience? Should he withdraw completely into himself abandoning all hope of meaningful communication and thus complete the circle of self-isolation which started with Flaubert? For what could be an easier way out of the dilemma between meaning and communication than to resolve it by eliminating the necessity of both and withdrawing into the purity of one's own personal vision?

One cannot, of course, question the authenticity of the vision; the problem, however, is to translate the vision into a language which, as we have said earlier, has increasingly become depleted in its imaginative and poetic resources. And yet it is through the incessant and despairing struggle to cling to the authentic albeit fast shrinking area of ones personal truth without diluting it with the popular image of it, that words can acquire a new meaning and communication a new dimension. The Marxist critics often fail to see that mere change in social relations would not bridge the gap in human communication unless the innate autonomy of full choices is restored to man. The feeble voice of literature which represents this area of freedom is often muffled, if not wholly distorted by the superpower techniques of repression used by the modern state, irrespective of the fact whether they are used in the name of socialism of a 'free society'. Once the very sources of language are contaminated by power-interests, nothing less than a total revaluation of the moral criteria is needed which govern our civilization.

Thus a significant work of art may not be immediately comprehensible, not because it is formally obscure to the audience—but more significantly, because it may question the moral basis of beliefs and illusions shared by the mass of the people. Solzhenitsyn in the Soviet Union—and much before him—George Orwell in England and Thomas Mann in Hitler's Germany—were not merely suspect in the eyes of the authorities—that is easy to understand—but even the so-called leftist critics seemed to resent their works precisely because they felt somewhat cheated of their illusions in the light of their books.

It is not surprising that much of the best imaginative writing today has abandoned the sterile postures of social revolt and linguistic experimentation. The problem is not to assert one's alienation from the audience—nor pretend a false identity with it in terms of a spurious populism—but to explore the entire area of anguish and frustration which has arisen as a result of this estrangement. This demands a complete sense of lucidity into the situation where the forces trying to corrupt language and befog ideas have become formidable. The writer is as much exposed to corruption as his audience—and any gesture of protest against the audience without accompanying efforts to elucidate the nature of darkness is a convenient way of maintaining a posture of protest and keeping one's hands clean at the same time.

An attempt at lucidity on the part of the writer in terms of language and ideas would go a long way in destroying the illusions which are collectively shared by a society at a certain point of time. Indeed the edifice of self-deceptive beliefs is so fragile that if one illusion is subverted, the entire structure would crumble. That is one reason why in an authoritarian society these illusions are so zealously guarded—even if the authorities have to use coercion or deceit to preserve the moral sanction behind them. Actually the extent to which the 'word' can be denuded of its meaning and turned into a cliche or jargon, it would be easier on the part of the authorities to identify illusion with reality—to enclose it, as it were, within a fortified area of mass-produced meaningless experience. It is the job of a writer as well as his moral concern to release the word from this fortress, to recover the meaning which is unique in every single experience. It is only then that the 'audience' would cease to be a threat—the audience whom he should either placate or analyse or ignore. It will cease to be the 'other' and become an extension of one's own self, to whom one would communicate by communing with oneself. The struggle for the 'word' to become a metaphor is the quest for the area of shared experience where the artificial contradictions between the writer and his audience would be resolved. At this point the problem of communicability itself would become redundant.



The Philosophical Basis of Radhakrishnan's Religious Pluralism

Donald H. Bishop

In this paper I shall begin with Radhakrishnan's religious outlook, then turn to its philosophical basis, and close with comments on its relevance for today. One of Radhakrishnan's concerns was relationships between the world's religions and attitudes their adherents might have toward each other. He recognized that technology had created a kind of world in which contacts with people of other faiths was unavailable. The question, then, was how one should view and deal with religions different from one's own.

His Hindu tradition led him to reject forthrightly and immediately the exclusionist view that "mine is the only true religion and all others are false." There were many, in the West especially, who adhered to that outlook reflected in one stanza of Bishop Herber's hymn, "Can we whose souls are lighted, with wisdom from on high, can we t o men benighted, the lamp of life deny? Salvation, O Salvation! the joyful sound proclaim, till each remotest nation, has learnt Messiah's name." Radhakrishnan also repudiated a later refinement of that position which might be called the "good-but" one, namely that there is some truth or value in other religions but mine is the fullest, highest or most complete one. That sentiment was voiced more than once in the 1893 World Parliament of Religions by people such as Professor Charles Briggs, who asserted in regard to religious scriptures, for example, that "All the great historic religions have sacred books which are regarded as the inspired Word of God. Preeminent among these sacred books are the Holy Scriptures of the Christian Church... all the sacred books of the world are not accessible to you. Study them, compare them, recognize all that is good and noble and true in them all, and the Old and New Testaments are true, holy and divine."

Radhakrishnan disavowed a third alternative, an example of which he found in his native India, namely the syncretist religion of the Brahmo Samaj. It was an attempt to take the best of each religion and amalgamate them in a single universal religion. He opposed such an alternative on both practical and philosophical grounds, and time, it would seem, has demonstrated the validity of his opposition.

The position Radhakrishnan finally settled on is what may be called pluralism. I shall describe it briefly and quote statements typical of its followers, before going on to its interesting philosophical foundations. One might start where Radhakrishnan did, his own Hindu tradition, which, he claimed, had always espoused such a position. It is found in the Vedic statement "Him who is the One Real sages name variously".

Radhakrishnan's pluralism is reflected in his belief that religions have a common ground on which the different religious traditions rest. "This common ground belongs of right to all of us, as it has its source in the non-historical, the eternal." Religions have a similar source also. They "...spring from the sacred soil of the human mind and are quickened by the same spirit. The different systems are tentative adjustments, more or less satisfactory, to spiritual reality." He describes the various religions as "alternative approaches to the mystery of God" and "many possible roads from time to eternity." They have been shaped by temperament, history and environment. The different creeds are the historical formulations of the formulas' truth... "While the treasure is one and inviolate, the earthen vessel that contains it takes the shape and colour of its environment." Creeds are "...attempts of the finite mind to grasp the infinite... they are different because they are adapted to the different needs of the people, their race and history, their sex and temperament."

Radhakrishnan pointed out that in man's history religion has taken many forms—"While there are innumerable changes in religious forms, religion itself is found to be a universal phenomenon." Finally he emphasized the common ends, goals or purpose of the different religions. Believers are "all engaged in the common effort to build a higher and more stable life. They are fellow workers toward the same goal." The end of religion "is experience of ultimate reality... the goal of religion is the opening of a new realm of consciousness." He noted that "Whatever point of view we start from, Hindu or Muslim, Buddhist or Christian... we get to the Supreme" and "the different religious traditions are governed by the same spirit... cosmic salvation is the aim of religions." Also, "The common goal of all religions is spiritual life. They do not differ in their aim, but only in the extent of the progress which they are able to make with the aid of their varying lights." Unfortunately, "The aim of religion may be universality, but religions are local and particular and interfere with the development of fellowship."

As to the philosophical basis of Radhakrishnan's religious pluralism, I shall point out several basic philosophical distinctions he makes, and then relate them to his religious position. One is the distinction between the universal and the particular. Radhakrishnan insists that universals are prior to particulars. They exist *a priori,* are self-dependent or existing. Particulars, on the other hand, exist *a posteriori.* They are grounded in, or dependent on, the universal they are an expression of. The universal reveals, or makes itself known, through particulars. Particulars are manifestations of, or in religious terms revelations of, a universal; they can never be validly equated with, raised to the level of, or made into a universal.

Radhakrishnan is emphatic that a universal may manifest itself in more than one way. Thus God as a universal being may show himself in a plurality of ways. The religious mystic especially realizes this, for he is one who "...is convinced of the inexhaustibility of the nature of God and the infinite number of its possible manifestations." Similarly, "The same God expresses itself at one stage as power, at another as personality, at a third as all-comprehensive spirit, just as the same forces which put forth the green leaves also cause the crimson flowers to grow." Radhakrishnan pointed out, regarding Hinduism, that "the religious value of Hinduism lies in the fact that it offers every kind of support to seekers of spiritual freedom, and brings them all to the realization of the one transcendent truth which is variously expressed." He noted that the nature of the particular may be historically conditioned. The mystic who associates religion with experience, for example, believes that "Something (a universal) is directly experienced, but it is unconsciously interpreted in terms of the (the particular) tradition in which the individual is trained" and "Each religious genius spells out the mystery of God according to his endowment, personal, racial, and historical."

Radhakrishnan's relating of the universal and the particular led him to see reality, the world or the cosmos, as an organic whole. It is a totality, a single entity or universal, made up of many different parts which are not separate and independent but are bound together in an organic whole. By analogy, each religion is a particular manifestation of religion *per se,* and each person is not only a separate, unique, being but he is a part of mankind as a whole. In this sense Radhakrishnan's metaphysical position is a rejection of positivism on the one hand and a unique combination of monism and pluralism on the other. He spoke of "...the simple and deep-seated conviction in the human mind that there is a unitary whole which manifests itself as a manifold." He pointed out that "To attempt to see things, persons and events in their interrelationship is inevitable to the human mind." He believes it is natural for us to see or want to see things as a whole, although the complexity of today's world makes it difficult. He would say that this natural tendency to synthesize is but a reflection of the unitive nature of reality as a whole.

078105

Radhakrishnan recognized that the means/ends and particular/universal distinctions are closely related. He insisted that we make a clear distinction between means and ends and that we not make means into ends. A state or a sect are but means, although people often universalize and idolize them. He pointed out that differences characterize means, and similarity, ends. Thus different means may be used to reach the same end. When applied to religion, this means that each religion is but a different means to an identical end, God. Hinduism is a good example of this, he noted, for it "...recognizes the diversity in man's approach toward and realization of the one Supreme Reality." Radhakrishnan exemplifies Hinduism when he says that "The sense of God is induced in several ways, through communion with nature, worship of goodness, through a sunset's touch..." Similarly, "The search of the mind for beauty, goodness and truth is the search for God. For some the aesthetic experience is the means to God; for others God is realized through good deeds; for still others the means to God is the search for truth."

Radhakrishnan put the matter very succinctly when he said "The goal of religion is one but the paths leading to it are many." Each path is simply a different means to the same end or destination. Doctrines also come under the category of means. Of them he said, "So far as it goes every doctrine is an expression of the Absolute Truth," however, it is only "...an interim provisional report which we have to use to gain the end of the awareness of the Supreme." Creeds, then, are simply different statements of the essential truth; they are but different means of reminding us of that truth, pointing us to it, or stating it.

For Radhakrishnan the means, while important, are not of equal import with the end. Thus the means, "The name by which we call God and the rite by which we approach him do not matter" nearly as much as the end they point, refer, or lead one to. Using a door analogy, Radhakrishnan said, "Religion has many doors" but each door opens into the same room in which God dwells. Radhakrishnan recognized that people often make particulars into universals. They insist that their particular religion is the only universally true one, their ethical values the preferable ones, their economic or political system the one that should be accepted as the best means to the end. They exult that which is their own and belittle that which belongs to others. Such egotism leads to intolerance and conflict in the social, political, economic and religious realms and for Radhakrishnan "this world has too long suffered and bled from religious intolerance."

Closely tied in with the two previous is a third Radhakrishnan emphasis, the distinction between the relative and the absolute. For instance, means are of the category of the relative and ends the absolute. Similarly, particulars fall into the category of the relative and universals the absolute. Means may vary or differ according to time and place. The ends they aim at do not, however. One group uses a particular way of governing itself; another uses a different one. One group devises a particular way of viewing and worshipping God; another uses a different way. The universal, namely, governing, in the first case is the same, just as in God in the second.

In applying this distinction Radhakrishnan regards both words and concepts as of the category of the relative. Concepts are the means by which the mind seeks to understand reality. Words, language or symbols are expressions or a verbalization of those concepts. One must distinguish between the reality being conceived and our concepts and designations or descriptions of it. The first, if it is in regard to a religious reality such as God, is of the category of the absolute, the infinite, the non-contingent. The latter is of the category of the relative, finite, or contingent. The same is true of Truth *per se.* Radhakrishnan insisted that "Since the truth itself is beyond any expression that can be found for it, there can be no such thing as the perfect formulation." Truth is of the category of the absolute; any characterizations or descriptions we make of it are relative.

Words point to the absolute; they are themselves of the category of the relative. Thus Radhakrishnan could rightly say, "Behind all the varied expressions, Brahman, Yahweh, Ahurmazda, Allah, there is the same intention, the same striving, the same faith." Moreover, "...no expression of religion is exhaustive and absolute" and "no particular religion is a final and infallible expression of divine will." Each religion is of the category of the relative because "The different religions represent not truth, but views or apprehensions of truth... They are varied historical expressions of the one truth, which is universal and timeless in its validity." Radhakrishnan's view regarding words and concepts is significant as far as religious creeds or dogmas are concerned, since creeds are man's attempts to verbalize in a systematic and rational way his beliefs about, or concepts of, God. Since words are relative, creeds are also. Creeds are temporal and finite. They are "historical formulations of the formless truth" and "A temporal and finite form of symbolism cannot be regarded as unique, definitive, and absolute." We should "look upon our dogmatic formulations as approximations to the truth and not truth itself." Regarding religious doctrines Radhakrishnan asserted that each "...is an approximate statement, a symbolic description of Absolute reality. The most illuminating account will fall infinitely short of expressing reality in its plentitudes" and, "The truth which is the kernel of every religion is one and the same; doctrines, however, differ considerably since they are applications of the truth to the human situation."

Radhakrishnan went on to say that, while "the different religious views are but the dialects of the same language of the spirit, the religious experience they aim at transcends the difference of words." The mystic especially is one who recognizes that "Absolute truth goes beyond all forms and creeds, all historic revelations and institutions" and that "The majesty of God, the mystery of reality is so great that human language is inadequate to describe it." Because he associates religion with experience, the mystic knows that "...all theologies are stammering attempts to translate the experience into words and draw out its implications" and that "Beliefs, opinions and dogmas belong to the contingent order and are variable and changing while truth is eternal and endless."

Radhakrishnan distinguishes between use value and truth value. The first is relative, the second absolute. This enables him to assert that "Creeds and dogmas, words and symbols, have only instrumental value." They have functional value, it being "to aid the growth of the spirit," but they do not have truth value, at least absolute truth value. They may have absolute functional value, since they are the means we use to communicate with each other, but not absolute truth value. No religious formula, Radhakrishnan asserted "...has absolute value for itself alone. It is to be accepted so long as it creates for those who use it a true path for the spiritual life." He pointed out that "Symbols and images are used as aids to the worship of God, though they are not objects of worship themselves." A religion becomes idolatrous when its followers worship the symbols and images, whether they are physical images or the symbol of creeds.

Radhakrishnan often criticized Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as being dogmatic because they are creedalistic. Each views its creed as absolute and tries to impose it on others. Each claims universality and infallibility for itself, thus giving rise to tension and conflict. Each absolutizes its concept of God, claiming it to be the true one which all others should acknowledge. Radhakrishnan wrote that "it is a natural tendency of the human mind to suppose that its own god is the God of all the earth, while all other gods are mumbo jumbo and made with human hands." Such a tendency can and must be overcome. Furthermore, it is a universal tendency "...to exaggerate the exclusive adequacy of truth of one's own religion," and that, too, must be left behind.

One reason Hinduism does not commit the same error is because it uses the relative/absolute dichotomy in distinguishing between God on the one hand and the Absolute or Ultimate Reality on the other. The Absolute in Hindu thought is pure consciousness, pure freedom, being *per se,* infinite possibility, the eternal, the changeless, the thing-in-itself, the first principle, the undetermined, without attributes, utterly transcendent, beyond the subject-object and all other dualities. In contrast, God, as conceived of in Western religions, is in time and space; he is caught up in history; he is a creator God or God of creation; he intervenes in time, has come into the world and has become involved in its dualities and multiplicities. The danger with such a view is the making of God into a being who intervenes for us, who favors what we have created, and is more concerned about our history and our side. If we would conceive of God as Ultimate Reality, or the Absolute, we would not identify him with our side, use him to rationalize our favorite schemes, support our limited views, our particular culture, or our way of life. We would not make an impartial being into a partial or biased one. We would recognize the Ultimate, or that which we call God, as a being who is beyond our limitations or the distinctions man makes, or the categories imposed on the world by man's mind.

Radhakrishnan recognizes this when he states that "The supra-personal and the personal representations of the real are the absolute and relative ways of expressing the one reality. When we emphasize the nature of reality in itself we get absolute Brahman; when we emphasize its relation to us, we get the personal Bhagwan." In another essay he wrote, "We call the supreme the Absolute when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view;" likewise, "When we emphasize the ineffable character of Reality, its transcendence of subject-object relations, we call it the Absolute. When we look at it as the creative principle of all existence, we conceive of it as God. The Absolute and God are two statuses of the same Reality." Problems arise when religious believers do not go beyond God to the Absolute or, on a lower level, make one of the gods into God. The danger of making the Absolute into God, or not distinguishing between the two, as happens in western religions, is that each religion will make its vision of the Absolute into the Absolute, or insist on its God being the Absolute.

It is significant that Radhakrishnan asserts Ultimate Reality, the Absolute or Absolute Being, as being ineffable. It "...can be shown but not said." It can be experienced under certain conditions. Words, however, cannot fully or adequately describe the experience of the Absolute or the Absolute itself. At most, we can say with certainty what the Absolute is not. Words may be used to describe God. In fact, religions do this all the time, and creeds are but the formalizing of this process. But again, we should remember that it is God and not the Absolute that we are talking about. And even in the case of God, all we can say is of the category of the relative.

Another distinction Radhakrishnan emphasized is between the accidental and the necessary, or appearance and essence. The world of appearance is characterized by multiplicity, differences and change, the world of essence by similarity, and non-change. When we look at things externally, we see that no two things are exactly alike, whether it be flowers of the same species, a tree, an animal or a human being. When we go beyond appearance, or the outer, to the inner, or internal, we recognize the oneness of all. Making the appearance/essence distinction enabled Radhakrishnan to view reality in its essence as a single organic whole. It enabled him to posit a single form of Being, or Pure Being *per se,* of which all existences are its varied manifestations.

Radhakrishnan indicated a number of implications of the distinction above. For example, despite the external differences between people, they are all in essence of one race, the human race, a view implied in Montesquieu's statement, "I am by chance a Frechman, but I am by necessity a man." Also one must distinguish between God and his manifestations. The latter are of the category of the external or they are external to God and are naturally characterized by differences. God in his essence, however, is one, a unity, without distinctions. Distinguishing between the accidental and essential enables one to get a proper view of creeds and rituals for, "If we compare one religion with another, we will see that the differences relate to the formulas and practices (the externals). When we get behind dogmas and creeds and get down to the depths, we discover that all religions draw their strength from the same unfathomable source." Creeds, then, fall into the category of the accidental or external, and the relative. Radhakrishnan reflects his own tradition in this regard when he says, "For the Hindu every religion is true, if only its adherents sincerely and honestly follow it. They will then get beyond the creed to the experience, beyond the formula to the vision of truth." Words, too, may be placed in the category of the external inasmuch as they are a type of symbol and deal with external reality. And when we use words literally, or as Radhakrishnan says, "If we insist on interpreting these symbols literally," difficulties arise. But if we get beyond words to "the moods they symbolize" agreement is possible. Radhakrishnan was quite aware of the Christian fundamentalist who interprets *The Bible* literally. This is due in part to his being caught up in the world of externals or appearances and not getting beyond them. One more implication of the accidental and essential distinction is in relation to the categories of having and being. Modern societies, attracted by externals, emphasize doing and having much more than being. To persons like Radhakrishnan, however, being is more important than having. Much more significant than what a person has is what he is. For being is prior to having. Being determines what a person does and has.

The philosophical categories already discussed determine Radhakrishnan's concept of God in additional ways. For example if God is of the category of the absolute and the universal, any notion of a "chosen people" is invalid and indefensible. Such a concept requires a God who is partial, biased, selective, and arbitrary, and that kind of being would be of the category of the relative rather than absolute. A God who selects one group over another, or over all others, is a local or tribal deity, a particular, not a universal being. If God is universal and impartial, he has not created one group of people superior to all others. The concept of a chosen people is a denial of the belief in the euqality of people, that all are equally dear to God, or that God goes out to all equally. If God is universal and loving, then he loves all people, or all his creation, equally. He does not love one group more than another. As Radhakrishnan said, "An exclusive absolutism is inconsistent with an all-loving universal God." Moreover, a partial, selective God would be an imperfect God, but we attribute perfection to God. The concept of a chosen people may be a correlate of a finite deity but not an infinite God. Finally, the doctrine of a chosen people goes with the notion of a special revelation. But a God who would reveal himself to only a portion of his people is an exclusive, rather than inclusive, type being. Radhakrishnan points out, however, that "Revelation is a universal gift, not a parochial possession."

On the basis of the above, Radhakrishnan asserted that "it is impossible to believe that God has been partial to a fraction of humanity. He cannot be conceived to have favorites." Those who believe in the chosen people concept, of course, perceive of themselves as the chosen ones. By doing so they set up a duality and create a barrier between themselves and the unchosen. God transcends dualities, however, whether it be the chosen or not chosen one, or even, as Radhakrishnan said, "the distinction of subject and object." Radhakrishnan asserted in the end that the concept of a chosen people is a man made one. It is a product of a person's, or group's, egotism based on the feeling of the superiority of his, or its, views, culture or religion. As far as Radhakrishnan is concerned, "no qualities of mind and spirit are the exclusive possession of any one race; no one group is superior to another." He said that, if we are to accept the notion of a chosen people, we should follow the example of Hinduism in which "the chosen people embraces all mankind." God has no reason to choose one group to lead all others to the gates of heaven, or eternal salvation, or to be an example for others to follow. God reveals himself directly to each individual, if we are to use revelation as the paradigm of the God-man relationship.

Radhakrishnan stressed especially that God is a being to be experienced, and to be experienced immediately, by each individual. Others do not lead one on the way to God; each finds the path for himself.

One comes into the presence of God, or God is a being into whose presence one enters, and "the highest kind of religion is the practice of the presence of God." Religion is "a matter of personal realization;" the divine is to be realized directly and immediately by each person. One way of realizing God is by looking inward and finding the divine hidden within the deepest recesses of the self. This is another reason for Radhakrishnan rejecting the chosen people concept. It assumes God as transcendent and coming down to, or acting upon, man in one way or another. If God is immanent, however, He is already within each of us, and being religious is a matter of becoming aware of, or realizing, the divine within. Radhakrishnan pointed out that "...truly religious experiences have occurred in all branches of the human family, though they may be explained differently in different ages and people." Such experiences have not been limited to one branch which then transmits them to the rest.

It is both interesting and significant that Radhakrishnan disavowed the notion of God as almighty, powerful, vindictive, wrathful, and vengeful. He rejected the symbolism of God as a monarch, a supreme ruler, sovereign over all. He would not accept the correlate which follows that God, as a sovereign, uses force, coercion, punishment, and reward in his relations with people. God is not one who looks upon people as his subjects who, when they obey unquestionably his will and dictates, are rewarded, and when not, are punished.

Rather, if God is conceived of as a person, He is a God of love, whose love goes out freely to all. He is not an angry and jealous God for "...with a jealous God goes the doctrine of a chosen people. God is a being to be revered and to whom one is devoted; and, if our devotion is pure and full, we do not need either God's rewards or his threats to do His will. Radhakrishnan wrote that "God is a real living one who inspires trust and love, reverence and self-surrender... the Love of God is more central than either His wisdom or His sovereignty... Love reveals the nature of God more than infinitude and sovereignty." Man's response to God which takes the form of love, joy, trust, and devotion is a much better response than that of fear, servility, and obedience. The reason is, of course, that man's response to God must be voluntary, not forced. Man is to be persuaded, not coerced. The former admits the dignity of man; the latter does not.

In regard to God, Radhakrishnan was quite aware of the distinction in his Hindu tradition between God as personal and impersonal. He shared Gandhi's perspective when he wrote that "God is truth and the service of truth is the service of God." Radhakrishnan recognized, of course, that conceiving of God abstractly is not satisfying to many, perhaps most, people. Yet it does not have the dangers inherent in the envisioning of God as personal or as a person. For those who anthropomorphize God tend to make God into their image, rather than letting God be what He is. As already noted, they tend to identify God with their subjective desires, aims, ambitions. They are in constant danger of looking at God from a utilitarian perspective, that is, in terms of what they can get from him, or how they might use Him. If people see God as truth, however, they would not limit Him to their particular version of the truth, for, as with truth, God transcends all particulars and is of the category of the absolute and universal.

Radhakrishnan used light as another metaphor to describe God. He wrote that "God is too great for words to explain. He is like light, making things luminous but invisible himself." This brings us to the question of epistemology and Radhakrishnan's epistemological position. He distinguished three types of knowledge, sensual, perceptual or rational, and intuitive. One does not necessarily exclude the other. Rather, they are to be seen as supplementary, and each being necessary and having its rightful place.

The first two have immediate utilitarian value. The reality presented to us by the senses and reason is characterized by multiplicity and change. Such knowledge helps us to know only externals or the external world. By it "...we obtain an acquaintance with the sensible qualities of objects." Reason is built on the senses inasmuch as it takes the data presented by the senses and organizes and generalizes it. The senses, and reason also therefore, are limited, deceptive and infallible. They involve us in a world of dualities, especially the true/false dichotomy. Regarding it, radhakrishnan wrote that the study of Comparative Religion "...has rendered untenable the usual distinction between religions of true and false." It has helped us to recognize that there is truth and falsity in all religions. No one religion is all true and the rest completely false. And Radhakrishnan was very perceptive and realistic when he wrote that "Generally the distinction between true and false is identical with mine and thine." History had demonstrated that people who use that duality tend to view their religion as right and others, false.

Through intuition we get beyond the true/false and other dichotomies. Radhakrishnan describes intuition variously. It is "...a mode of consciousness which is distinct from the perceptual and carries with it self-evidence and completeness." He writes that "...intuitive insight is a greater light in the abstruse problems of philosophy than logical understanding." He calls it "non-sensous, immediate knowledge" by which "we see things as they are." He says that "In logical knowledge there is always the duality, the distinction between the knowledge of a thing and its being" while in intuition "...the knower is establishing an identity with the known." This monistic emphasis is seen in his statement that through intuition "we become one with the truth, one with the object of knowledge. The object known is seen not as an object outside the self but as a part of the self."

Intuitive knowledge, Radhakrishnan asserted "arises from an intimate fusion of mind with reality. It is knowing by being and not by senses or by symbols." Radhakrishnan is making at least two important points here. One is that knowledge or truth comes as a result of identifying with, or becoming one with, the known. The other is that knowledge has an ontological basis. Knowing is a type of consciousness. Knowing is awareness, or to know is to be aware of, sensitive to, empathetic toward the known. Thus the dualism of subject and object, or knower and known, is overcome. Knowing intuitively is a unitive experience. It is an enlarging of our consciousness and our sympathies, the result being that "we raise our thought above the narrow controversies of the day."

As to the relationship of reason and intuition, Radhakrishnan pointed out that "Even if intuitive truths cannot be proved to reason, they can be shown to be not contrary to reason but consistent with it." The two differ in that "Intuition gives the idea of the whole and intellectual analysis of parts." Also the intellect "...involves a specialized part while intuition employs the whole self." In addition, "Intuition give us the object in itself, while intellect details its relations" and intellect "gives us the unique in the object" while intuition "tells us of the qualities it has in common with others."

Radhakrishnan enumerated several practical benefits of intuition. One is that it helps in overcoming intellectual arrogance. "How certain we are of the truth of our opinions. There is no worse prejudice than belief in one's own inerrance," Radhakrishnan wrote. Intuition helps us to go beyond opinion. It may help us to be more honest. Radhakrishnan observed that "The possession of reason is not a guarantee of our humanity. To become truly human, we need something more than reason." Reason, as the Buddha pointed out, is like a two-edged sword which can be used for good or evil, humanely or inhumanely. In relation to religion, intuition leads us to place lesser value and emphasis on creeds and dogmas which, as products of reason, often divide rather than unite. It helps us to recognize that "The basic element in religion is not the intellectual acceptance of dogmatic principles or historic events" but rather the immediate apprehension of the Divine and the experiences of direct union with the Deity.

I would like to conclude with some remarks of appreciation for Radhakrishnan and also indicate the relevance of his outlook for today. For I believe that what he wrote and said two or three decades ago is just as appropriate now, and perhaps even more so, as it was then.

One example is his religious pluralism. His pluralistic view may be fairly widely accepted among people who deal with religion academically. It is not among the population at large, even in a country as supposedly free and liberal as the United States. For there, as in many other parts of the world, we see a resurgence of religious orthodoxy of a fundamentalist, absolutistic, and dogmatic nature. Radhakrishnan wrote in 1927 that "Hinduism is wholly free from the strange obsession of the Semitic faiths that the acceptance of a particular religious metaphysics is necessary for salvation, and non-acceptance thereof is a heinous sin meriting eternal punishment in hell." If that is true of Hinduism, it is not true of the Semitic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In 1987 the majority of their adherents are as intolerant of each other as they were sixty years earlier. Too many of their followers are traders, not prophets. Radhakrishnan describes the difference thus, "while the prophet founders of religions declare that the community is worldwide and make no distinctions between Jew and Gentile, the Greek and the barbarian, the traders in religion declare that the greatness of one's own creed and group is the end, and coercion and violence are the ways to it. They develop group loyalties at the expense of world loyalty."

In contrast, Radhakrishnan insists that one of the functions of religion is "...to draw men to a common centre across national boundaries." It should stimulate "loyalty to the whole world, not membership of any one community." It should be "...the binding force which deepens the solidarity of human society in spite of the obvious shortcomings of historical forms." Radhakrishnan compared true religion to true love which "...regards the whole world as one's country and all mankind as one's countrymen."

Radhakrishnan's pluralism is significant in that he urged its practice in the political, social, and economic realms as well. His political philosophy centered around the belief that "The political ideal of the world is not so much a single empire with a homogeneous civilization and a single common will, but a brotherhood of free nations differing in life and mind, habits and institutions, existing side by side in peace and order, harmony and cooperation, each contributing to the world its own unique and specific best..." It is significant that as early as 1954 Radhakrishnan was advocating the philosophy of coexistence. Of communism and capitalism he wrote, "We hold that it is possible for the two systems to live side by side influencing each other. To coexist is not to compromise or capitulate. It is to understand each other and modify each other." As he noted, coexistence requires getting beyond the Western pattern of either/or. It necessitates denying an arrogant nationalism. Such nationalism is a blind and uncritical faith in one's nation. Even as such a "faith in one's religion seems to kill faith in others" so such "faith in one's nation kills faith in mankind" or other nations.

Radhakrishnan regarded extreme nationalism as a form of "political parochialism" and an obstacle to coexistence and the growth of a sense of world community. Nationalism as one facet of ethnocentrism which is the tendency to see one's own culture, society, religion, and way of life as the only way, seems to be the height of egocentricity." Nationalism and ethnocentrism, then, are but the pride and egotism we find in persons raised to another level.

Radhakrishnan justified his political, social, and economic pluralism on several grounds. One is the fact of individual differences. A pluralistic world has room for such; a monolithic one does not. Also the pluralist recognizes that mankind is engaged in a common quest, or is seeking similar ends, even though they reach them through different means. The pluralist emphasizes the presence of common enemies, regardless of political or social differences. Those enemies include such specific ones today as pollution of the environment and the threat of nuclear war, as well as the more general one which Radhakrishnan called "the spirit of materialism congenial to the whole world."

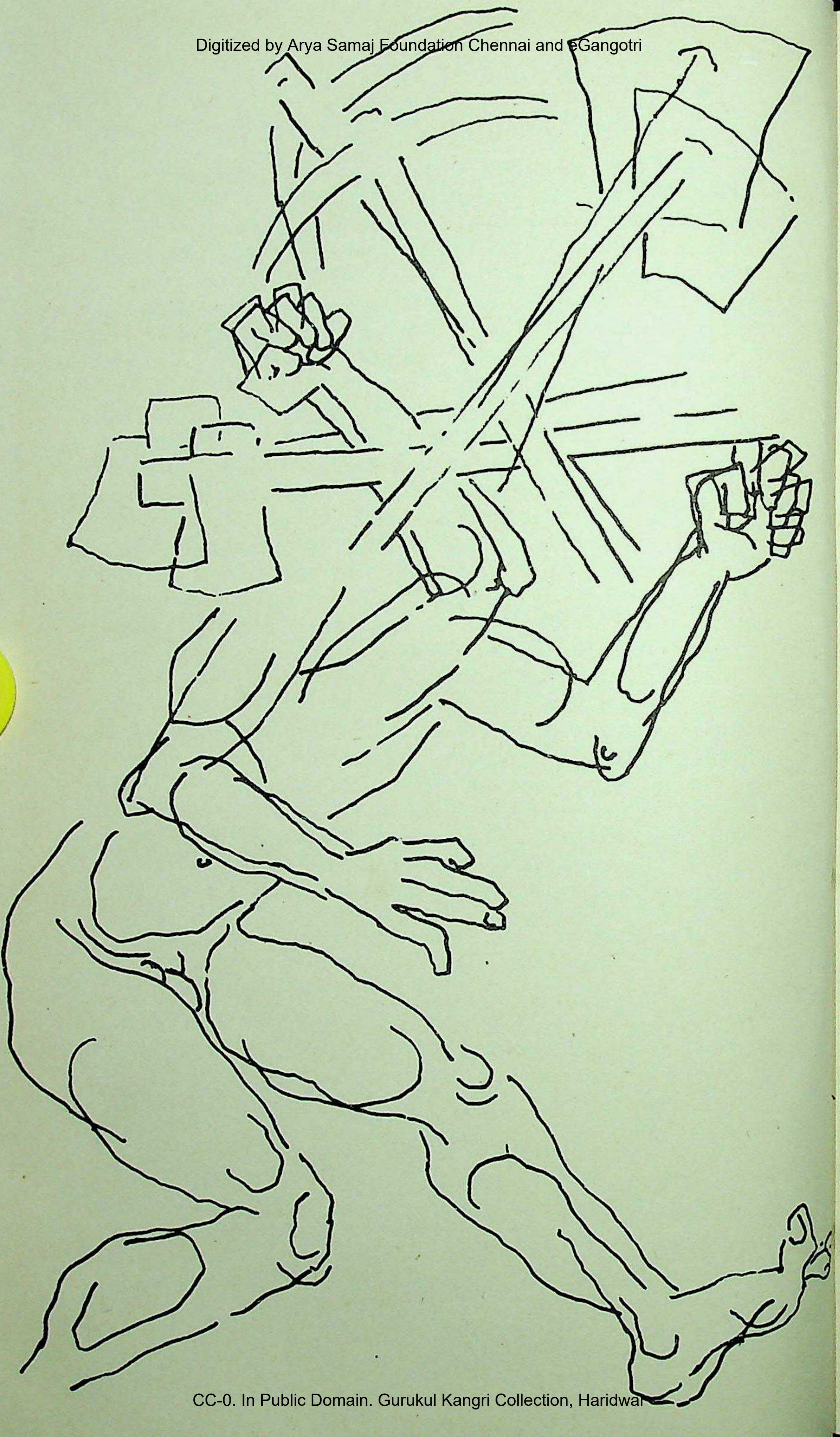
The pluralist also recognizes that there is good and bad in all persons, and in their institutions, therefore, as well. Radhakrishnan wrote, "We should remember that men and their institutions are partly good and partly evil and when they fight they fight for causes which are also partly good and partly evil." By remembering this we transcend the distinction between "good guys" and "bad guys," thinking of ourselves as the first and others as the second. Similarly, Radhakrishnan asserted that truth and goodness is everywhere. It is not limited to one group or nation, and what we need to do is "to recognize and rejoice in truth and goodness wherever we find them."

Radhakrishnan also noted two tendencies in people, or two types of personalities. One is the tendency to see differences and emphasize that which divides; the other is the tendency to see similarities and emphasize that which unites. The pluralist is the second type. He illustrates Radhakrishnan's statement, "To the understanding eye the things that unite are greater than those that divide." Finally, Radhakrishnan adds a religious justification for his pluralism in areas outside of religion. Since God is the ultimate source of truth and goodness, He, as a universal being, has not limited them exclusively to one group, society, or nation. Moreover, since it is God who has created individuals differently, He wills "a rich harmony and not a mindless conformity" for humankind.

Radhakrishnan did not believe that unity rules out diversity. Many people mistakenly associate oneness with sameness. He does not, however. Radhakrishnan insists that there is "no real antinomy between unity and diversity." We can have a united world, even if it is one with differences in outlook and institutions. The key to it, of course, is tolerance, or, as Radhakrishnan would prefer to say, the willingness to accept that which is different, or those who differ from ourselves.

Radhakrishnan's opposition to exploitative-type relationships is as valid today as three decades ago. We continue to see persons in terms of their use value, or how we can use them to our advantage. That exploitative attitude is a denial of the inherent dignity and worth of persons. We take a similar attitude toward nature and natural resources. We have an exploitative attitude toward our environment, and the menace to it has become acerbated by technological advances and the huge machines man has made to control, dominate, and fashion nature to his will. Radhakrishnan suggests that there is a great need to develop the attitude of harmony with nature. We need to nurture it much more than master it. We should try to live in harmony with nature rather than dominating and bending it to our will.

This is related to the final point I would make regarding Radhakrishan's contemporary relevance. It is seen in his statement, "All nations, communist or non-communist, see to have an unshakeable faith in the efficacy of violent action." What Radhakrishnan is referring to is the idea that contemporary man, with all the power his science, technology and machines has placed at his disposal, has become a victim of that power. He has made it into an idol which he worships. He turns to it as the means of resolving differences, and naked power is a false and an immoral means which can lead only to the destruction of humankind.



Rabindranath Tagore : Overtures to the Great Unknown

Sisirkumar Ghose

In the land of his birth Rabindranath Tagore was known, simply, as the Poet. What kind of a poet? Thanks to the variety, abundance, the shifts in style, stance and inequality, it is hard to be sure. Preferences vary and one may prove any thesis one likes. In fact there is not one Rabindranath but many Rabindranaths: *nana* Rabindranath, as he himself once put it. There are paradoxes, tensions and unsolved problems it would be idle to deny. Not unacquainted with the night, Tagore admitted "the torn and the incomplete" in his makeup. The relation between the persona, the multitudinous masks, and the person, is still to be looked into.

Not a soft, still-life Sage, ladling cliches, but a disturbing presence, creative in crisis, he may not be explained in a purely Indian frame of reference. He had peers in distant ages and climes; he sends us in several directions in search of the author. Was the national bard, as someone hinted, a 'gift of the west'?

Be that as it may, his forms and themes rarely remained the same for long. Essentially a lyric poet, his later works bring in an inward, deeper dimension, "the resonance of the original sea." The drama of his maturing mind remains unveiled. The soft Tagore pleases, the tough Tagore teases.

The older he grew the livelier he became, the poetic awareness reaching out in directions at once near and far. The poet sits in judgement over himself and his unsentimental critique, with tragic undertones. Was he moving towards a change of consciousness? The extraordinary exploration and use of the negative create a music more meaningful than that of the fluent songs, beautiful as these are. The chameleon poet scaled new heights in his later poems, a purgatorial *terra incognita* for his readers in translation. There are fresh discoveries to be made. Now that the reaction has come and gone, the need for a balanced view has become necessary and mandatory. We shall get the Tagore we deserve.

Tagore wrote poems all his life. Like the Great Victorians he also overwrote. In the very last year (1941) three volumes, small but significant, came out: *Arogya, Janmadinay* and *Sesh Lekha,* the last posthumously. The total output easily runs to more than fifty. A paraphrastic, chronological account would be tedious and little more than a catalogue. To press a pattern of logical growth, as Niharranjan Ray tried to do, is bound to fail. Tagore's growth was not linear. Many poets in one, he is not easy to track or label. What we shall try is a selective survey hinting at few of the achievements. Many things will, naturally be left out, his narrative, children's and nonsense verse, for instance. Even so, there are several peaks, whispering to each other. If only we could decode and connect!

We have to be on our guard. Tagore should not be loosed upon as a footnote to English poetry. There is no reason to be unduly subservient to the derogatory obiter dicta of foreign critics, Eliot or Kathleen Raine, whose ignorance of Tagore's language seems to be their mainstay. Between the English and the Bengali Tagore, is it necessary to say which is the more authentic? Reading Tagore through translations (his own, and now Radice's) is an embarrassment. The translations have given rise to myths and misunderstanding. Some of the myths were fostered by his early champion, who later turned against him, William Butler Yeats. Yeats looked upon Tagore's genius as hereditary, also that he was a Sage and a folk poet, a great-rooted blossomer. None of these assumptions is quite true. *Gitanjali,* on which his western reputation rests has not stood the test of time. The Nobel Prize was but a happy happenstance. The craze is over: To those who have read him in the original, it does not seem to be his best, or greatest. In any case, he was more than the poet of *Gitanjali,* which was a phase and not a climax.

Let us begin at the beginning. Following a quasi-mystical experience, the teenager poet comes out with a manifesto: "The awakening of the waterfall".

The rays of the morning sun have struck
at the roots of my being…
My mind has awakened from its sleep-..
The waters gurgle and swirl
The pebbles hurtle and fall…
I will wing from peak to peak
I will pour out my love…
Today how sweet the birdsong!
How swift the rays of the sun!

One is tempted to compare this with his "last days sun", written six decades later, two weeks before his passing away.

The first day's sun
has asked
at the manifestation of new being —
who are you?
No answer came.
Year after year went by
the last sun of the day
the last question utters
on the western seashore
in the silent evening —
who are you?
He gets no answer.

Now, at life's end, there is no excitement, no movement, only the stasis of a rare, borderland epiphany of man thrown into the universe. Romanticism in extremis, it merges into an existential query or crisis, man's first and last, harking back to the archetypal mystery of being. The poem's terrifying honesty and simplicity—"No answer came"—a sort of solar backout, hangs in lonely splendour across the eternal silence of the infinite spaces. Without fear, doubt or sadness, or idealistic salve, with no good anywhere, what the poem achieves is not an answer but an awareness, the riddle of Existence, the autonomy of the irrespressible question, the blight man was born for. This too is Tagore, for ever unknown. Is not the question the answer?

To go back is not the impetuosity of youthful awakening a little out of line for one who was nurtured on the milk of the Upanishads? Neither matter nor manner is wholly Indian. Was the stormy petrel a person or a Vedanta? The fact is Indian poetics and poetry cannot account for Tagore. At one time comparison with Shelley and Keats was common. Fit subject for comparative studies, Tagore was perhaps more a romantic than a sage or rishi. The loneliness and the restlessness are part of the romantic outfit. He had his share of romantic agony, the love of the impossible and the undefined. Listen to a typical motif:

I am restless, I am athirst for faraway things...
O Farthest End, Oh the keen call of Thy flute!

In *Balaka*, the flight of the swans, a work of the middle period, the mountain fancies itself as the drifting summer clouds. The flight of birds across the darkling Jhelum gives him in a flash "beyond the limits of birth and death", the ethos of creative evolution. To the poet's entaptured ears the birds seem to sing: "Not here, not here, but in the bosom of the Far-away." Was not the spirit of flight, the refusal to be located ("Not here, not here") a post or a passion? Is he not closer to Whiteman than to Yajnavalkya?

Still, as his short stories prove, at least for a while he did belong. His Zamindari work—surprisingly, he seemed to have been an excellent, efficient landlord—had brought him close to the country life. *Sonar Tari* (Golden Boat) is the gold harvest it celebrates, a magical blend of the realistic and symbolic modes that beats Keats and Kalidasa. With its repeated riverine images, the liquid verse (lost in the translation) builds a haunting appeal that is as remarkable as Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and Mallarme's *L'Apres Midi,* without the surrealism of the one and the sophistication of the other. A familiar rural scene turns before our very eyes, into epiphany. The miracle was never repeated. Attempts at explication, including Tagore's own have failed to unravel the archetypal mystery. Here is the poem in a truncated translation, poor shadow of the substance:

Rumbling dark clouds, torrential rain
Alone I sit on the bank
The harvest done, sheaves gathered
Swollen, swirling river
As we cut the paddy it begins to rain

A small paddy field, water on all sides,
Trees on the far side, smeared shadows

Who is it that comes singing in a boat
The face seems familiar

To what distant land do you sail
O come and take my paddy
Take me aboard as well

No room, no room, the boat is small
My golden grains have filled it all

Across the rainy sky clouds come and go
On the bare bank I sit alone
The golden boat has taken everything
All I had is gone.

The poem is a parable but the key is hidden. Tagore was perhaps better as a poet of the Earth and Nature than of Man. In an early poem we hear him say:

I feel the tenderness of the grass in my forest walk,
    the wayside flowers startle me.
That the gifts of the Infinite are strewn in the dust
Wakens my song in wonder.
I have seen, have heard, have lived

In the truth that exceeds all knowing
Which fills my heart with wonder and I sing.

Again:

Infinite wealth is not yours, my patient and dusky
Mother Earth.
The toys that you make for your children are fragile.
You cannot satisfy all our hungry hopes, but should
I desert you for that?
Your smile which is shadowed with pain is dear to my eyes.
For ages you are working with colour and song, yet
heaven is not built, only its sad suggestion.
I have seen your tender face and I love your mournful
dust, Mother Earth.

In the nature of things wonder had to cease. Slowly a change comes over. Enchantment gives place to disenchantment. He speaks in less romantic terms, the voice is harder, colder. In 'Prithvi Pranam', one of the later poems, he salutes Nature:

At the altar of the setting sun...
I stand before you without illusion...
O indifferent, ruthless Earth,
Before I am utterly forgotten
Let me leave my homage at your feet.

A note of protest enters now and then. Accepting "the moon without her magic message" could not have been easy. For Tagore anticipating memorial meetings, which he forbade, he asks his audience to come instead to the sal forest in flower. It is an irony of the muses that the poem is invariably quoted in stuffy lecture halls year after year. Not a city poet. Tagore was an ecologist long before the phrase became fashionable. Is not all poetry magic?

Nature poets are notoriously anti-social marginal men, if not rebels and outsiders, and Tagore was no exception. Now and then a strident defiant note comes through. The conformist Tagore is less convincing. He had a standing quarrel with the tradition of renunciation. He was equally against the religious establishment. Here are two examples:

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.
I feel the embrace of freedom in the thousand
bonds of delight...

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination
of joy and all my desires ripen into fruits of
love.

The aesthete's credo its angrier hard-hitting moments:

Leave this chanting and telling of beads!
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner
of a temple, Open thine eyes and see thy God is
not before thee!

The cruel dig reminds one of Kabir. But Tagore could sing even in distress. Mahatma Gandhi had reasons of his own to like the well known marching song, "Walk Alone". True, it was written during the days of swadeshi and was put to political misuse. But it was more than a slogan for individual satyagraha. Is it not really the song of pioneering the free man's worship? Tagore's songs are a world apart, of sheer unearthly enchantment. Before their pathos even the nightmare of the partition melts into thin air. He has sung his people into a nation, wrote Ezra Pound, before 1947. Tagore has the incredible distinction of authoring two national anthems; of India and Bangaldesh. Isn't this a triumph of poetry over politics?

In his late years he called himself, a trifle dramatically, an outcaste; a dangerous self-portrait for one who was himself a cult figure. Tagore had not one mask but many. It is hard to be sure of the real face. In part a Baul, he sought, outside society, the man of his heart (*maner manus*). Was not "Roti Baul" more roti than baul? Was he really a philosophic or religious poet? Perhaps not. Sensitivity is not philosophy, nostalgia is not religion. Tagore is not Dante. He was not a religious poet in the sense Tulsi, Mira, Kabir, Ramprasad and Rajanikanta are religious. The reason is simple; romanticism cannot be religious because it is itself an *ersatz* religion. Tagore's religious life was essentially aesthetic.

A more inward note enters his poetry only with the last illness and *Prantik*, the interior scene on illumination of a secret catastrophe. A mini-tragedy, the beginning of the end, it has yet to be pieced together and its place fixed in the Tagore canon:

A dark mystery descends from the air on land and water.
My body merges into an endless void,
turning into a shadow, a point.
Standing alone, at the foot of the starry altar,
With folded hands, gazing upward I cry...
O Fosterer, you have withdrawn your ray of light.
Now reveal to me your best and loveliest form.
Let me see the Self, one in you and me.

The last three lines are a translation of one of the verses from the Isha Upanishad, a mystic prayer to the Light. Never had he come so near to death to the edge of existence or non-existence. A terrible beauty is born, and the soft Tagore is scattered. This poetry is very different from the fluent, stylised prose poems, with which he had amused himself and bewildered others.

The poetry of the last four years is dominated by extreme situations, critical no less than self-critical. This is the world of Tagore's little known later poems. Poetry is not only a criticism of life but a judgement on itself.

Self-conscious, he grows aware of two main limitations in his own poetry. Is the source of poetry on earth or in heaven? With marvellous, stark honesty and simplicity he admits a double failure; that he had failed to be a poet of the people, also that he had failed to know himself. The language is now so unvarnished as to be mistaken for prose and its profundity missed. Even Radice, his latest translator, is betrayed by the semantic simplicity and notices only the 'speaking voice', not the vision that could use negatives for a most positive criticism of life:

They go on working
In Anga, Banga, Kalinga'*s seas and river-ghats,*
Their myriad hum of voices
woven together, night and day,
makes resonant the great world's livelihood.

Sorrows and joys unceasing
blend in chant raising the mighty hymn of life.
On the ruins of hundreds of empires
they go on working.

He is of course looking from a distance, social no less than aesthetic. He himself is not a working poet.

In a complementary poem he does not spare himself:

Seldom have I won access.
My ways of life have intervened.
The tiller,
the weaver,
the fisherman,all sustain the world with their varied labour.
I have known them from my high status
unable to enter the inner chambers.

And I know I have failed
and my song has been left incomplete.
It may have moved in many directions,
but missed reaching the All.

So here I am waiting for the poet of the people...
May he give what I have not.

Sincerity could hardly go further. In a letter he has admitted, coolly but courageously, that his poetry had not been a growth of the nature soil. Was this not a subtle way of sparing himself? The leftist critics of Bengal were quick to capitalise on the confession. But in the long run it is perhaps his spiritual and existential encounters that stand out more than the social failure.

The poet was coming to a closer grip with himself and destiny. His was a late maturity, but the dark fruits suggest a revaluation of his career. Pain, veil, sorrow and the harrowing of hell were not unknown quantities. That they crowded round his deathbed gives them a grandeur and dignity, and existential stamp that Tagore's works had never known before. Here was the real stuff written in the heart's blood;

In this vast universe
The giant wheels of pain revolve.
Filling this body of clay
Sweeps the red, delicious tide of tears

A few weeks before his passing away Rabindranath writes:

Sorrow's dark night has come
to my door again and again....

In another, the personal greif is soon cosmicised:

Your creation's path you have covered
with a varied net of wiles,
O Guileful one...

Before moving out everyone has to pay one's tithe to *Maya*, even if it breaks you in the process. The Guileful one did not spare Rabindranath Tagore. With a self-control outsoaring stoicism, he refuses to cave in. These his last testaments alter the received image of a soft poet. There is also the fascination of the difficult, a new note. Ready to depart, this Tagore does not deceive:

In words write in blood I saw
my being manifest,
my own self I knew
through repeated hurts and pain.
Hard is truth.
That I loved.
It never deceives.

After such knowledge what forgiveness? As he had said earlier in *Prantik, he knew it was time for the bird to fly. A master of pathos, he had already sung his farewell more than once. One of these, a Gitanjali* poem, had a strange history. In his last letter to his mother, Wilfred Owen had quoted this poem. A rare tribute to Rabindranath Tagore and at least once the power of his translation. The serenity of the leave-taking is a sign of high civilization. The decor and decorum, the tender tone, are the very voice of the poet of Santiniketan:

When I go from hence let this be my parting word,
that what I have seen is unsurpassable
I have tasted the hidden honey of this lotus
expanding in the area of light and thus am I blessed
let this be my parting word.
In the playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play
and here have I caught sight of Him that is Formless.
My whole body and limbs have thrilled with His touch who is beyond touch;
and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word.

But this was after all a dalliance, good poetry rather than great poetry. Great poetry is a disclosure, the establishment of larger relationships. Sometime before the end came Tagore wrote another, farewell in a different key, spiritual rather than aesthetic in calm of mind, all passion spent, he had made his terms with the unseen Helmsman.

Did the hands that write *Gitanjali* shakes at the gates of non-existence—Maybe yes, maybe no. The poem is not on death but on the mystery of existence. Mystery, "The huge flood of the unmanifest" was perhaps Tagore's first and final value. In front of the ocean of Peace, *samukha shanti parabar* unquestionally belongs to world poetry. One of the greatest that Tagore ever wrote—both when he questions as in 'who are you?', and here, where there is no question of a question—it strongly suggests a ritual act, a prayer, as a soul returning to its source, with the poet as priest, rehearsing his own exequies a privilege of none but the holy. Like the best of Tagore, it is more a song than a poem, is used not only for his own death anniversary but of others as well. In brief, it is treated as a *mantra*, a revealed rhythmic truth, the highest honour for poet and poetry. His kinship with the ancient seer poets has no better credential than this Elegy for Everyman:

In front lies the Ocean of Peace.
Launch the beat, Helmsman.
You will be the comrade ever,
take, O take him in your lap
In the path of the Infinite
shall shine the pole star
Giver of freedom, your forgiveness, your mercy

will be wealth inexhaustible
in the eternal journey.
May the mortal bonds perish,
may the vast universe take him in its arms,
and may he know in his fearless heart
the Great Unknown.

The romantics, said Mathew Arnold, did not know enough but Tagore knew more of "the Grteat Unknown" than most men.

When a poet, at eighty, on his death-bed, can raise words to the level of the sacred, what do you call him? Not a poet, but the poets' poet.

What did the Helmsman tell him? We shal never know.

Literature and Social Change

Sudhir Chandra

The theme — shall we say the problem — of literature and social change is wide-ranging. It virtually exhausts, both in terms of theoretical concerns and empirical scope, the field covered by the sociology-of literature. And it is problematised in its very conception; the moment literature is bracketed with social change. For, however rewarding it may seem from the viewpoint of the human sciences to enrich their basic assumptions, methodologies and resource base by reaching out to literature, there are respectable theoretical positions that would not permit the intrusion of extra-literary factors into what they project as the autonomous world of literature. In different ways these positions autonomise the 'text' and 'pre-text' and banish any context that is not internal to literature; be it historical, cultural, ideological or psychoanalytic. Sociology of literature, thus, can only be an exercise in futility.

Without making light of the intellectually scintillating view that sustains the auto-referentiality of the autonomous world of literature, I believe that to deny a social context to a man-made 'text' is to overstrain a bit the imaginative powers of human comprehension.

Even after refusing to accept the theoretical objection to the linking of literature with social change, we continue to be faced with the problematisation of the theme in yet another, though related, way. And this brings us to the larger—end at the same time limiting—context of this seminar. The subject we are assembled here to discuss is the writer and his audience in an increasingly technological age. What sets the focus for our deliberations is the increasingly technological nature of our age. The underlying assumption, obviously, is that the general position of the writer, as also of his audience, and the relationship between the two are significantly affected by the nature and scale of technological development in a given age.

This assumption, in its turn, rests on the widely accepted truism that recognises an inescapable connection between literature and the age in which it is produced. But this is a truism that hides behind its wide acceptance a large spectrum of ideological divisions with regard to the relative effective potency of the interacting units: literature on one hand and the age on the other; whatever the concrete sense in which the term age is used. Within the Marxist discourse the effective status of the two units is suggested in terms of the base and the superstructure. It is a different matter that even the Marxist discourse does not constitute a monolithic structure. Serious objections have been raised in the past few decades not only to the relegation of literature to the epiphenomenal superstructure, but also to the static mode of distinguishing between the base and the superstructure. The ongoing debate on the problem of 'materialism' and 'culture' indicate the degree of dissatisfaction with what till not long ago were the received assumptions of Marxism. Except, therefore, for those who consider it theoretically or ideologically imperative to adopt logically 'pure' positions, we may reasonably posit a causal relationship between literature and social change.

Without going into details, we may recall two important stages in the way modern technology has affected literature as a social institution; and do so without forgetting that these stages did not effect a sudden or complete break with the past. The first of these changes began to occur with the growing advance of the printed word. The progressive growth of the press and the book industry caused a set-back to the oral tradition and sharpened the division between 'elite' or 'high' and 'popular' literature. In our country the process began in different regions at different points in time during nineteenth century, and it more or less crystallised during the first quarter of the present century.

The second stage is one that we are witnessing in our own day. An upshot of the media boom, especially the cinema and television, it appears to be offsetting the earlier reversal of the position of 'popular' culture, though with a critical difference. The 'popular' now is in reality making way for a more or less undifferentiated mass culture. The latter is what is threatening to dethrone 'elite' culture. As yet nascent, the transformation may well prove irreversible. Not only will this transformation affect the production of new literature, it will also contribute to the standardisation of the old through films, television, comic strips, and what have you. Besides the invisible and unconscious, and therefore so much more powerful, influence of mass culture on his/her work, the writer will often be reaching his/her audience through the extra-literary mediation inevitable in adaptation for large-scale consumption through other forms.

It is, hopefully, an over-drawn picture. It is even tinged with an aversion for the civilisational imperatives being forced upon us by the pattern and pace of modern technology. After all, it is not possible to talk about the technological nature of our age without betraying one's attitude towards it. And, depending upon whether one hails it, is resigned to it, or categorically condemns it, the position of the writer and the fate of literature may appear in varying light.

But to subscribe fully to the pessimism implicit in this over-drawn picture — in this mode of viewing the present and future impact of technology on human culture — would be tantamount to attributing to 'materialism' the power to determine culture, which would be a rejection of the causal relationship we have earlier suggested between the two.

Culture, and as part of it literature, has its own dynamism which is not simply modified by but also modifies the dynamics of technology. Thus it happens that beneath the apparently dizzy pace of change in many segments of our existence — personal as well as collective — there remains a dimension of relative continuity in terms of what may be called social consciousness: our ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, modes of identification, customs, and rituals. More often than not, we are so taken up with changes all around that we miss this powerful undercurrent of continuity informed with subtly and slowly operating changes.

Nowhere does this complex reality of societal dynamics emerge more clearly than in literature. While registering the visibly rapid and striking changes taking place on the surface, as it were, literature brings out in their fullness the ambiguities, uncertainties, ambivalances, and other nuanced aspects that underlie social change even in the most dramatic of times.

It is, however, no passive reflection that literature provides. It represents human will in its incessant interaction with larger societal and natural forces; including, if you will, supernatural forces. Both the interior and the exterior constitute its field. In a fundamental sense, literature embodies the paradoxicality of human will which is socially conditioned and yet volitional: by the authority of its tradition, literature controls the working of creative imagination and simultaneously remains exposed, if one may say so, to the possibility of being enriched by a writer's violation of the selfsame tradition. Besides being an index, literature is also an agent of social change.

I wish to concentrate, by way of illustrating my basic submission, on a phase of social change and literary development in modern India with which I can claim a semblance of familiarity. As my point of departure I may use the current controversy over the issue of sati which has shocked some of our intelligentsia on account of what they see as the advocacy of a barbaric custom. These members of intelligentsia, for their part are derided by some of the best among their own peers, and also others, as deracinated westernised urbanites who understand little of their own culture and sympathise with it even less. While charges and counter-charges are being passionately traded, and people are being seen either as opponents or as proponents of sati, the general reaction—barring a tiny minority—is one of profound ambivalence: people condemn the inhuman violence involved in the abuse of the custom and yet feel fascinated by the high ideal of sati. The inference becomes hard to resist that despite the many changes that have come about in man-woman relations in general and in the position of women in particular, our ideal of womanhood remains frighteningly unaltered.

Sati was officially abolished 160 years ago. Less than thirty years after this, the Hindu widow was legally entitled to remarriage. There was a general quickening of social conscience with regard to the dismal condition of women in the Indian society. The historiography of modern India has amply documented the efforts made at the national, regional and caste/community levels to improve the status of women and to reform the contemporary Indian society in other ways. But this historiography has generally employed binary categories to comprehend the processes of social change. Consequently, it has seen persons and movements as either reformist or conservative, progressive or reactionary, secular or communal, and so on. In the bargain it has lost sight of the underlying ambivalence that characterised the changing attitudes of people.

But a serious examination of contemporary Indian literature—irrespective of which language one decides to choose—radically alters the picture provided by the historians. Assuming that the use of binary categories is heuristically helpful, what this literature shows is that people's attitudes betrayed traits that are difficult to reconcile in terms of these categories. The same persons or movements often exhibited, with regard to the same issues, attitudes that were simultaneously progressive and reactionary.

Once sati was abolished and widow marriage legalised, a good deal of discussion about the position of women veered round the question of remarriage. A standard argument that was advanced to grudgingly concede the need for widow marriage rested on the evils that stemmed from the virtual impossibility, in some cases, of controlling the natural urges of young—and 'lascivious'—widows. Even the decisive *shastric* justification for widow marriage was said to have been provided by the *Parashar Samhita* which, it was duly emphasized, was the *samhita* for the degenerate *Kali Yuga*; an age in which women would not live up to the lofty ideals of old. Obviously, the model behaviour expected of a widow was that of a sati: she had to remain chaste to the memory of her deceased husband. Still, the cheerlessness of her existence was felt with anguish, and her miseries were decried. But this seemed linked with the poor widow's submission to her socially dictated destiny. If she demurred, disapprobation ensued.

This is but a bald recapitulation of a complex attitude. Comprising compassion and callousness and moralism and cynicism, it manifested in ways in which these constituent elements were differentially mixed. The complexity of this attitude and the variety of its manifestation can be seen in the writings of Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1834-94) and Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi (1855-1907), two outstanding *litterateur*-intellectuals of the last century who considered it their patriotic duty to understand the nature and problems of their society in order to work for its regeneration. Naturally they felt driven, among other things, to deal at considerable length with the question of women, and as such with the predicament of widows.

Remembered, in keeping with the binary logic of our historiography, mainly as an arch conservative who contributed signally to the enunciation of new Hinduism, Bankim made widows his concern in two of his novels, *Vishabriksha* (1872-3) and *Krishnakanter Will* (1878). He dealt with them in some of his key non-fictional writings as well. Incredible though it may sound, Bankim's treatment is marked by a sympathy for the tragic fate of widows and an understanding of their emotional world that match the poignance of the best passages on the subject by Vidyasagar himself. Especially in the portrayal of Kunda, the female protagonist in *Vishabriksha,* Bankim displays great tenderness of feeling for the sadness of a young innocent widows's life. Similar sensitivity, if not tenderness, is shown in the initial characterisation of Rohini, a child widow, who is the centre of attention in *Krishnakanter Will.* Unlike Kunda, who quietly submits and suffers and wills nothing but her own death towards the end of *Vishabriksha,* Rohini is a prepossessing lady with admirable strength of mind and character. Bankim could not have chosen two widows more dissimilar than Kunda and Rohini. To both he gave sympathy and understanding, for both were victims of a tragedy that was inflicted by the society.

Compassion for widows is, however, counterpoised in both these novels by an almost irrational moralism that, against the grain of the narrative, comes down heavily upon the widows. The moralism is writ large in the title of *Vishabriksha.* It seems as if, afraid of his own literary prowess, he chose a moralistic title that would warn the readers in advance not to be carried away by the sympathy they were bound to feel for the widow's plight. The warning, it may be noticed, is strengthened in the opening chapters with the help of ominous occurrences like storm, death and dream that presage the imminent tragedy.

A pattern is discernible in the working of this compassion and its countervailing moralism. This is best exemplified by Bankim's characterisation of Rohini. Until her elopement with the man she loves, Rohini is treated with sensitivity; particularly moving being the description of her despair following the failure of her suicide bid. But once despair makes way for the will to extract her iota of happiness, she is shown as the very picture of evil. Even her death, unlike that of Kunda, evokes no positive feeling for her. But, then, unlike Kunda, Rohini had dared to live.

It is this fusion of diametrically opposite pulls into a single attitude that is so well reflected in *Vishabriksha* and *Krishnakanter Will*. These diametrical pulls can be seen separately in Bankim's discursive prose. Thus, in an essay on religion and literature, he wrote in 1885:

> An eight-year old girl is widowed. She knows not what *brahmacharya* means. But upon her is inflicted the pain of a *brahmacharya* which even an old man of sixty would find it hard to practise. As a result, she is made to cry, we ourselves cry, and other members of the family cry. Otherwise dharma is lost.

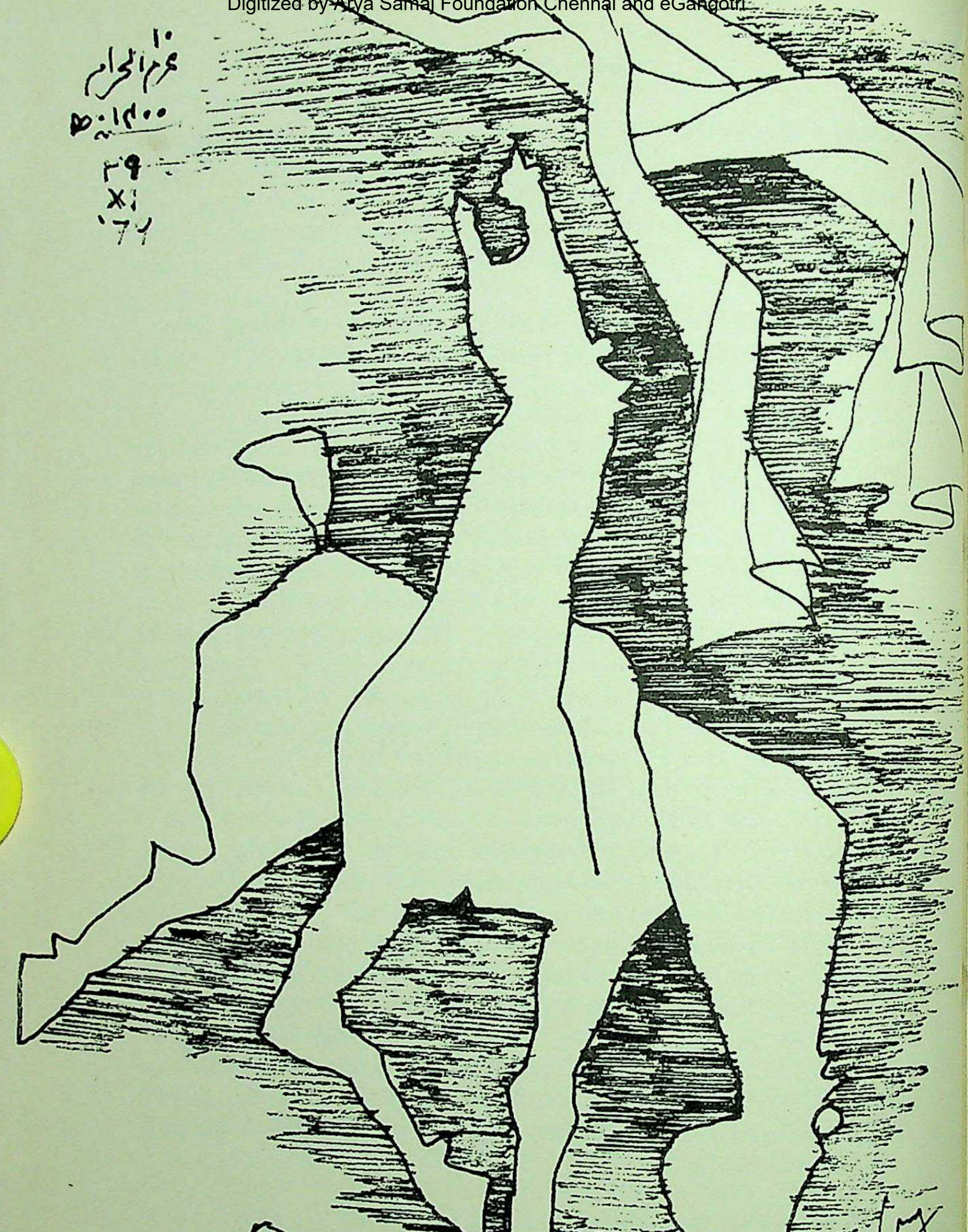
Neither in its substance nor in its tone does this confirm our image of Bankim as an ideologue of new Hinduism. But the following from *Kamalakanter Daptar* (1875) does:

> When I think of the elevated section of women, the vision that rises upon my mental horizon is that of the sati determined to be cremated along with her dead husband. I picture the burning pyre and, in the midst of rising flames, the virtuous lady lovingly holding on to her bosom her husband's feet. Opening out slowly, the fire embraces one portion of her body and moves towards the other. The fire-gripped lady thinks of her master's feet, and in between exhorts the assemblage of people to chant the name of Hari. She betrays no trace of physical pain. Her face is joyous. Gradually the sacred flame flies up, life is left behind, and the body reduced to ashes. Blessed is her tolerance! Blessed her love! Blessed her devotion! When I think that till but a few days ago the delicate woman of my country could court death in this fashion, a new hope courses through my mind. I am convinced that the needs of greatness are inherent in us. Shall we not be able to witness this greatness tomorrow?

A similar tension can be seen in the case of Govardhanram Tripathi. In his four-volume *magnum opus*, *Sarasvatichandra* (1887-1901), his initial impulse had been to write a novel that would so combine realism and idealism as to inspire his people to work for the uplift of their society and country. Among the aims he wished to achieve was to popularise social reforms in general and widow marriage in particular. Towards the end of his fourteen-year effort, without in principle giving up widow marriage, Govardhanram provided a *finale* that would suggest that remarriage was not meant for Kumud, the widowed female protagonist of *Sarasvatichandra,* because she epitomised the ideal Aryan woman.

Bankim and Govardhanram are not identical; neither as creative writers nor as social visionaries. Yet they are atypical. What makes their significantly dissimilar work typical is the way it reflects the tenor of contemporary social consciousness. As used here, tenor means the way they comprehended their society, the means they used to enliven it as conscious agents of change, and also the ways in which they were read and reacted to. It is this tenor of social consciousness that explains the phenomenon of *Chokher Bali* (1902) within years of Bankim's death and just a year after the completion of *Sarasvatichandra.* It is clear from the way *Vishabriksha* figures in *Chokher Bali* that by creating Binodini Tagore was trying to alleviate the bleak tragedy of Kunda; as also, if one may speculate without concrete textual evidence, the meaninglessness of Rohini's flight. But he was aware of the constraints within which he had to operate. Binodini could not have been conceived—as an effective answer to *Vishabriksha* and a real hope to the Indian woman—in utter defiance of the state of the society in which she was to exist. It is a measure of Tagore's greatness that in *Chokher Bali* he anticipated the Indian woman of the future without etherealising her; as had been done, in very different ways, by O. Chandu Menon in *Indulekha* and by Govardhanram Tripathi in *Sarasvatichandra.*

The realisation that, ninety years after her conception, Binodini is still struggling to become the normal woman in India brings us back to our point of departure. But for the impact of the Deorala tragedy, I would have illustrated my point about literature and social change by choosing some other critical issue like nationalism, regionalism or communalism. Viewed through literature, these issues, too, would appear rather as fusion of diametrically opposite pulls than as mutually exclusive categories.


۱۰
محرم الحرام
۱۴۰۰ھ
۲۹
XI
'۷۹
حسین
Husain
Dubai

The Suspicions of Mr. Sadhan

Satyajit Ray

When Mr. Sadhan entered his home returning from work, he found a dry twig lying on the floor of his bedroom. The furniture in the room was quite ordinary — a cot, a cupboard, a stool to hold a pitcher of water. The smallest particle of dust in any corner was intolerable to him. His linens were snappily clean. Though he was a fastidious man, Sadhan took no practical interest in any of this as he had paid the price of a housekeeper. He wrinkled his nose at the sight of the twig.

"Pocha!"

The servant Pocha presented himself.

"You called, Sir?"

"What do you mean? Do you have any doubt about it?"

"No, Sir. Why should I?"

"Why is there a twig on the floor?"

"That I don't know, Sir. Perhaps some bird dropped it."

"Why would a bird drop it? It would have brought it to build a nest. Why would he drop it, eh? Didn't you notice it when you swept? Or haven't you swept at all?"

"I sweep every day, Sir. That twig wasn't there when I swept up."

"Is that the truth?"

"Oh yes, Sir."

"Still, it's an odd business."

The next morning before going to the office Sadhan saw a sparrow and suspected that it was making plans to build a nest. But where? Where was there a place in his apartment? In the bay window? That could be it.

He began to wonder why, out of this three-storey seven-flat building, the sparrow's gaze had fallen on his particular apartment. Was there anything in it that could attract birds?

After giving this a lot of thought, Sadhan began to suspect that it was that new hair oil he had been using. According to that medicine man Nilmoni from the second floor, it was a cure for dandruff. Perhaps its strong scent could attract birds. He further suspected the possibility that Nilmoni had been singing the praises of this hair oil as part of a plan to turn Sadhan's home into some sort of a bird sanctuary.

Actually, Sadhan's paranoia was well-known to everyone at 72 Mirjapur Street, and in secret they all had a good laugh about it. "Hey, what's the new suspicion today?" He had to listen to this kind of question at the end of almost every day.

And not just questions, they had other ways of pulling his leg as well. In the evening a card game which Sadhan usually attended was held in Nobendu Chatterjee's first floor flat. One day on his way to the game Nobendu gave him a twisted lump of paper and said, "Look at this, Sir, and see if there is anything suspicious about it. It was thrown through the window."

In truth, the page had been torn from Nobendu's daughter's maths excercise book. Sadhan flattened it and having looked at it for a while said, "It seems to be some kind of code written with numbers."

Nobendu had just stared at Sadhan without a word.

"But we have to figure it out," said Sadhan. "Just consider the possibility that it's some kind of threat. In that case..."

Of course, the code was never deciphered, but that was not the point. From this wad of paper Sadhan's suspicions could go off at a tangent. He believed that the entire city of Calcutta was a den of deceitful gamblers and scheming liars. In these circumstances it was a matter of self-protection to be always suspicious.

One day when Sadhan returned home from work he found a large package on his table. At first he suspected that it had come to his apartment by mistake. Who would send him a package like this? He had been expecting no such parcel.

He went over to it and saw that his name was not on the package. This increased his suspicion.

Having summoned his servant Pocha, he asked "Who brought this here?"

"Sir, a man came and gave it to Dananjoy this afternoon. He asked for you and said it was yours."

"What's in it? Who sent it? Was that all he said?"

"Yes, Sir, that was all."

Having put his shawl on the rack, Sadhan sat on the cot. It was a large package, almost large enough to hold a number five football. But there was no way of finding out who had sent it.

He got up from the cot, went over to the package and picked it up. It was very heavy, at least five kilos.

Sadhan tried to remember the last time he had received a package like this. Yes, his aunt who used to live in Karoda had sent him some mango pulp *(Aamsotto)* about three years ago. But she had been dead about three months now. Today, Sadhan had no one who could be called a close relative nor anyone else left. Why a package? He never received more than one or two letters every three months. It would have been less perplexing if there had been a letter with the package, but there wasn't one.

Or was there? Sadhan concluded that it must have been lost due to Dananjoy's carelessness.

Now it was necessary to speak to Dananjoy.

Thinking that it would be improper to send for him, he went downstairs himself. Dananjoy sat in the courtyard with a mortar and pestle grinding something. He got up and came over when he heard Sadhan's call.

"Did someone give you a package for me today?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Was there a letter with it?"

"No, Sir, there wasn't."

"Did he say where it came from?"

"He mentioned a name like 'Madan' or something. I'm not sure."

Sadhan couldn't remember anyone by that name. Who knows what the man had actually said? Sadhan had long suspected that Dananjoy was a fool.

"Wasn't there any slip of paper or receipt with it?"

"There was a slip of paper, Sir, and he signed it."

"Who? Shorashi?"

"Yes, Sir."

Well, it was fruitless to question Shorashi. He had signed a slip of paper as Sadhan, but had not paid any attention to where the package had come from.

Sadhan returned to his apartment. It was November and one could clearly feel the chill of winter in the evening air. Soon it would be Kalipuja. The preparations were in progress and from time to time one could hear crackers exploding.

"Boom!"

That cracker had exploded right in his neighbourhood. Just at that moment a shock ran up Sadhan's spine.

"A time bomb!"

Could there be a time bomb in that package waiting for some predetermined moment at which it would explode and bring Sadhan's activities in this world to an end?

One heard about these time bombs everywhere these days.

It was the weapon of choice for all international terrorists.

But who would send a bomb to him? And why?

As soon as he had formulated that question in his mind, Sadhan remembered that in his profession there was never any lack of enemies. Even he had to butter people up in order to win contracts, just as his business adversaries had to, and when he won the contract, all the other competitors became his sworn enemies. That was often the way things worked.

"Pocha!"

He could see that his voice was barely audible. His throat had become dry as a board.

Pocha showed up anyway.

"You called, Sir?"

But was this really a good idea? Sadhan had thought he would tell Pocha to put the package to his ear and listen to see if there was a ticking noise. The mechanism of a timebomb goes tick-tock, and at a specified moment this ticking is transformed into an enormous explosion.

Just when Pocha put it to his ear, what if the package...

Sadhan couldn't think any more. Pocha was still standing there awaiting his master's order. Sadhan was forced to say that he had called by mistake, that he wasn't needed.

Sadhan would never forget that night. It was not uncommon for him to lie awake at night due to indisposition, but this was the first time he had spent an entire night sitting in his bed soaked in a cold sweat at the very edge of conscious terror.

Having gained some confidence when the bomb didn't go off by morning, Sadhan resolved that he would have to open it that very evening and see what was inside. Even he realised that his suspicions were getting out of control.

But that evening something happened and the package remained unopened.

There are many people who read the whole newspaper, but Sadhan was not one of them. He glanced at the headlines at the top and middle of every page, and today was no exception. That was why his gaze had skipped over the news about a murder in north Calcutta. He learned of the event when he inquired about some commotion he had overheard passing by Nobendu Chatterjee's apartment on his way home from the office.

A murder in Patuatola Lane; the victim's name was Shibdash Moulik. Hearing this a long distant memory jumped to life in Sadhan's mind. He once knew a Moulik very well. Was his first name Shibdash? It was possible. Sadhan used to live in Patuatola Lane where Moulik had been his neighbour. There used to be a card game at Moulik's every night. Everyone had called him Moulik, so how could Sadhan know his first name? Two other men belonged to that card game; Shukhen Datta and Madhushudan Maiti. Sadhan had never met anyone with so treacherous a character as this second man. Sadhan was absolutely convinced that he was a superlative hustler at cards. One day, he finally had to confront him with his accusation. Madhu Maiti's reaction to this had been terrible. Sadhan found out then that there was always a knife in Maiti's pocket. It was thanks to Moulik and Shukhen Datta that Sadhan was alive today.

After some success in business, Sadhan left his house in Patuatola Lane and moved to his present apartment on Mirjapur Street, severing his connection with Moulik and company. Though he could not give up his addiction to cards nor his manic paranoia, there had been other great changes. His dress improved; he gave up biris for cigarettes, and he would sometimes go to a resale shop to buy some bric-a-brac for his apartment — a painting, a vase, or an imported ashtray. All of this had come about in the last seven years.

If the murdered Shibdash Moulik was the Moulik he knew, then the murderer had to be Madhu Maiti. About that Sadhan was certain.

"How was he killed?" he asked.

"Brutally," said Nobendu Chatterjee. "There was no way to identify the corpse. They found the name on a diary in its pocket."

"Why couldn't they identify the body?"

"It was just a torso. There was no head."

"No head! That means..."

"Chop-chop!" Nobendu demonstrated this by lifting his folded hands above his head and violently jerking them down. "They haven't yet been able to find out where the murderer disposed it."

"Have they figured out who the murderer was?"

"There used to be a card game at this Moulik's place, and the police think it was someone connected with that."

As he walked up the stairs, Sadhan realized that his head was spinning. The time he accused Madhu Maiti of cheating at cards appeared vividly in front of his eyes. He had escaped the knife attack, but for a long time afterwards he remembered how Madhu Maiti's gaze fell on him with burning hatred. And he remembered Madhu saying, "You don't know me, Sadhan! You got away today, but I'll have my revenge. Maybe today. Maybe ten years from now!"

It was a sworn threat. Sadhan had thought that by fleeing Patuatola Lane, he had saved himself, but...

What if that package was from Madhu Maiti? Dananjoy had said "Madan". Dananjoy was hard of hearing; there was no doubt about that. Is there much difference between Madhu and Madan? Almost none at all. Madhu or his people sent this parcel and the slip of paper was to make sure that it reached him.

Shibdash Moulik's head was in that package!

In the distance between the top of the stairs and his door, Sadhan's mind locked onto this idea. From his door, he could see the package placed on the table next to the vase. Now, both the weight and dimensions of the package clearly indicated what was in it.

Pocha stood there a little surprised to see his boss just standing in the doorway. With an enormous effort of mind, Sadhan cut through his confusion and told his servant to bring him some tea.

"And, did anyone come by today, looking for me?"

"No, Sir."

"Hmm."

Of course, Sadhan suspected that the police had come on a raid while he was out. What would happen to him if they found the head of a murdered man in his apartment? As he thought of this, he broke out into a sweat.

It was as if some strength returned to his mind as the tea reached his stomach. At least it was not a time bomb.

This much, however, was certain. If he had to spend the entire night sitting up next to a box with a head in it, he would go mad.

A pill put him to sleep right away, but he could not escape from his nightmares. At one point, he saw himself playing cards with the headless Moulik. At another, he saw Moulik's bodiless head coming towards him saying, "Friend. I can't breathe in this box. Have a heart, set me free."

Despite the sleeping pill, Sadhan awoke at half-past five as had been his lifelong habit. Perhaps it was due to the clear light of dawn, but Sadhan awoke with a solution to his present problem.

His troubles began when the head arrived, but where was the obstacle to sending it away? Once he bade farewell to this thing he would be free from worry. As dawn was breaking, before doing anything else, Sadhan stuffed the package into a market sack and went out. He had to admit that the packing was good: even though it contained blood, none had soaked through and stained the wrapping.

It took twenty-five minutes to reach Kalighat by bus. From there he went on foot to the Adiganga river and finding a relatively secluded spot, threw the package as far into the middle of the river as he could.

"Splash!"

The package was out of sight, and Sadhan was out of the woods.

It took thirty-five minutes to return home. When he entered the outer door, Shorashi's wall clock was just striking seven.

Suddenly it occurred to him that for a few days now he had been feeling he was forgetting something. Once you are over twenty-five, these things start happening. Nilmoni had told him to eat lots of spinach for this.

Today, Sadhan had to leave half an hour earlier than usual, because he had some things to take care of on the way to work.

Just as he walked into "Modern Exchange", the resale shop on Russel Street, the owner Mr Tulsi came up to him with a smile.

"So how's the table clock?"

"Have you sent it?"

"Of course, I said I would, didn't I? Hasn't it reached you?"

"Well, yes, that is, I mean..."

"You liked it so much, you put down five hundred rupees in advance. You're an old customer. Would I go back on my word to you?"

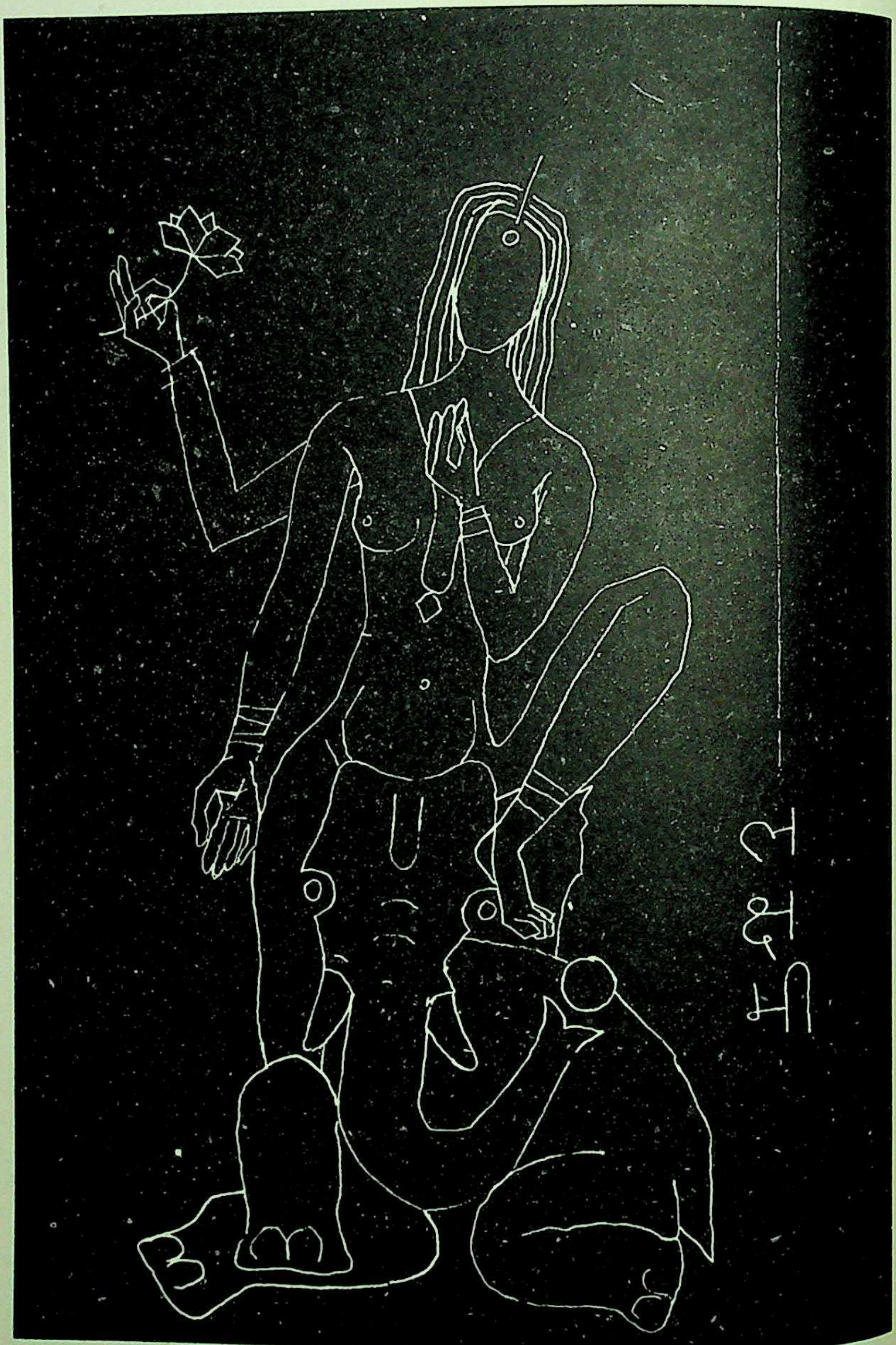
"No, no. Of course not."

"You'll see. That clock's a first class timepiece. By a famous French company too. And you got it for next to nothing. Great luck."

Mr Tulsi went off with another customer, and Sadhan left the store. A clock for next to nothing had become nothing now.

Could there be any doubt that Dananjoy had heard "Modern" as "Madan". And can anyone deny that Madhu Maiti has had his revenge?

Translated from the Bengali
by Doug Varley and Vinay Lal



THE MAUSOLEUM

Bhisham Sahni

This happened in my home town and, I assure you, it could not have happened elsewhere; for there is no town like my town, and no people like my people — and, by the grace of god, they are quite conscious of it, too!

On the outskirts of our town flows a stream, turbid, tired, thin and shallow, in which even buffaloes do not like to wallow to cool their backs of a summer afternoon; but we call it "The River".

There is an enclosed piece of land, with a number of sisam and sufeda trees on it and quite a few thorny bushes which do not turn green even in summer, and no birds are seen except the crow and the kite, and dust hangs in the air all the year round; but we call it "The Garden", and are convinced that there cannot be another garden in the world to compare with it.

There is hardly anything that the town can truly call its own — fruits come from Kabul and cloth from England. Its own fruit consists of sour 'aluchas', 'lasuras' and 'garandi', which even the sheep and goats have given up eating; but the townspeople regard the place as the home of all fruit.

The only thing that the townspeople can claim as their own is their moustaches, the twirled ends of which, sharp and pointed, seem never to droop.

And therefore this incident could only have occurred in my home town.

There is no ancient monument or mausoleum in our town, but pray do not mention this shortcoming to any townsman, for he will look at you as though you were a caveman, and say, in a shocked voice: "But haven't you seen the mausoleum of Bhai Ram Singh?" and thereafter will launch upon a long panegyric on Bhai Ram Singh and the Mausoleum.

Now, Bhai Ram Singh was no saint or apostle; his name is not to be found in any of the history books. Beyond the boundaries of our town, nobody has even heard of the poor fellow; but, in our town, every child knows about him.

Well, the incident which I am going to narrate to you has something to do with this mausoleum.

Ours is a small town, with a dozen or so mohallas and a labyrinth of lanes, marked off by a few long streets with rows of shops in them. Right in the centre of the town stands a high mound, on top of which there is a temple, and around it, from different points, descend these long streets, as though not one but numerous rivers flowed from the head of lord Shiva. People are carefree. And everybody, whether he works or not, must go on at least one round of the town in twenty-four hours. Because of this, there is always a good deal of bustle in the streets.

And, in this very bustle, some twenty years ago, Bhai Ram Singh appeared on the mound — a man with a fair complexion, a long flowing beard, partly grey, partly black, and a thickset, stout body. At that time he must have been about forty or forty-five years of age. Wearing a snow-white dress, coming down to the knees, and holding a big metal pitcher under one arm, he came and stood on the top of the mound. But nobody paid any special attention to him.

On one side, some boys were busy playing. Bhai Ram Singh slowly went up to them and, calling out to one of them, said: "Here, son, dr'nk this!" And, filling a cup from the pitcher, he held it out to him.

The boys gathered round Bhai Ram Singh and began to gaze at him. Then one of them took the cup from his hand and, looking right and left a number of times, put it to his lips. But the very next moment he spat out the contents and threw the metal cup on to the ground.

"This is Chiraita , (a medicinal plant) son. This is a sure preventive against boils and pimples! Here, drink a little, each one of you!"

But not one of the boys stretched out his hand. The fellow who had tasted it was still spitting, and the other boys were laughing at him.

At last Bhai Ram Singh left them and went down one of the lanes. To satisfy their curiosity, the boys followed him for some distance, but then turned back and resumed their game.

Bhai Ram Singh descended the mound, inviting the urchins to a few gulps of 'Chiraita' wherever he saw them, and gradually disappeared in the maze of lanes.

It was thus that Bhai Ram Singh first appeared in our town. Within a few days, everyone in the place knew aboout him. Wherever he went women dragged their children from their games and made them drink 'Chiraita', because 'Chiraita' is — as my townfolk will tell you — the surest preventive against boils and pimples. The moment Bhai Ram Singh entered a street or a lane, children would go into hiding, mothers would run after them, and the bystanders would laugh.

Bhai Ram Singh had become a kind of laughing-stock for the people.

But that did not in any way deter him. After a few days, he had a tap fitted to his pitcher, so that he could pour out the 'Chiraita' more easily from it. Then, in the place of one cup, he began to carry three cups with him, so that three boys could be served at the same time. And then, a bugle was seen hanging from Bhai Ram Singh's shoulder: on entering a street, he would blow it and announce his arrival.

People began to indulge in all sorts of surmises about the man. Someone said that Bhai Ram Singh had come from a neighbouring village, where he had a cloth shop. Another said that he was an intelligence man and had come to the town in search of a murderer. (My townspeople are categorical even in their surmises.) Someone said" "He has got forty thousand rupees with him — I have seen with my own eyes!" Little boys said that he lived in the cremation grounds and, at night time, went about forcing Chiraita down the throats of ghosts!

All kinds of guesses were made, but gradually they all subsided. Bhai Ram Singh was a quiet kind of person. If anyone ever asked him, he would say: "I live at the feet of the Lord! I am only his humble servant!"

* * *

When the months of March and April passed, Bhai Ram Singh began to serve cool fresh water from his pitcher. Sometimes, feeling elated, he would entertain people with sandalwood sherbet — the sandalwood sherbet of our town, by the way, is world famous; and during winter months, people would sometime be served hot cardamom tea.

Thus Bhai Ram Singh's daily round of the town continued as before, and he began to be known as the "Chiraita Sadhu" all over the town.

And, in this selfless service, ten years passed.

Now, if a sadhu has a fixed place of his own, a kind of seat of his own, he soon rises from the position of a sadhu to that of a Sant. But a wandering sadhu, however much he may be talked about, still remains a mere sadhu.

The same thing happened with Bhai Ram Singh. During these ten years, his beard turned silken white, wrinkles appeared on his face although the complexion remained ruddy, because of his daily round with the pitcher. But even then Bhai Ram Singh continued to be called the "Chiraita Sadhu". Even now, when he went about the streets, it was he who bowed to the passers-by and greeted them — no one ever cared to greet him first. And this was understandable, for who has ever become a Sant by merely serving Chiraita to the people?

But one day something happened to Bhai Ram Singh. He either felt disillusioned, or had a dream, or received a divine communication — no one can tell which. But the next morning, when he appeared on the top of the mound to commence his round he announced to the people standing nearby:

"Pious ones, last night I received a message from God, and therefore I am leaving. Tomorrow morning at daybreak, I shall cast away this human body!"

He uttered these words opposite the shop of Sardar Budh Singh, the cloth merchant. That day, too, there was the usual pitcher under his arm.

Budh Singh, the cloth merchant, heard what the sadhu had said, but paid no particular attention to it. His younger brother, however, who had taken to the Namdhari faith, turned round and exclaimed:

"Did you hear what Bhaiji said? He is going to cast away his mortal frame!"

"I heard it well enough," Sardar Budh Singh replied. "Let him change his 'earthly garb' if he wants to. I don't have to light his funeral pyre. Your children have been drinking his Chiraita. you may go and touch his feet, if you like."

At this, both brothers laughed and no more was said about Bhai Ram Singh.

But two women customers, who were sitting in the shop at that time, had heard it, too. At first they, too, had laughed, but while returning home, as they went through Sewa Ram Lane and saw Bhai Ram Singh standing in a corner, serving Chiraita as usual, they felt deeply touched.

"What a pity!" one of them said, putting the end of her wrapper to her lips. "He is casting off his 'earthly garb' tomorrow, and is yet serving Chiraita to the people today."

Thereafter, it did not take long for the news to spread in the town. From Sewa Ram Lane it went to Naya Mohalla, from there to Chhachi Mohalla, thence to Lunda Bazar, Bhabhar Khana, Saidpuri Gate.... As it went from lane to lane, it gathered speed, till, within a short time, the news began to blow through the lanes and streets of the town like a whirlwind — that the "Chiraita Sadhu" would give up his body the next day at 4'o clock in the morning.

* * *

As usual, Bhai Ram Singh's pitcher was empty by the time he reached Lunda Bazar. From there he turned round and headed towards the cluster of trees outside the town, known as Penance Grove, and, on reaching it, quietly sat down under a tree.

Penance Grove has an old well in its midst. People go there in the morning for ablutions and the like and, off and on, a visiting sadhu holds his discourses there.

Till forenoon that day, it remained quiet in the grove, but just when it struck two and the women "wound up" their kitchens, some of them came out in search of Bhai Ram Singh, with pity in their hearts and God's name on their lips, and at last sought him out in the Penance Grove.

By 4'o clock in the afternoon, quite a crowd of women had gathered there. Menfolk heard about it and laughed it away. But, by and by, they, too, began to grow interested: "Who knows, he may be a genuine one! There's no harm in having a look at him."

Partly out of a sense of amused curiosity and partly out of a sense of devotion, young and old headed towards the grove. After all, the town was the same; if one goes, all must go.

And so the man who had remained a mere "Chiraita Sadhu" till the forenoon of that day had by evening been raised to the position of a "Saint". Some wishes are granted unasked. The fellow about whose existence few had bothered for ten long years became the centre of attention of thousands, and people were standing on their toes to have a glimpse of him.

Under one of the trees a carpet was spread. Then someone went and brought a small 'chowki' from somewhere. To enable people to have his darshan, it was necessary that he should sit on a higher level. One devotee began to wave the flapper. Flowers began to appear in large numbers. From nowhere a gas lamp was brought, then another. There was no end to the devotion of the women. Money, flour, ghee, all began to be offered.

Bhai Ram Singh sat, with his eyes closed and his mind fixed on God — as the occasion demanded. And then, from somewhere, came the sound of music — the traditional harmonium and the tabla — and the kirtan started. People bowed again and again and offered their homage to the "ethereal visage" of Bhai Ram Singh.

The news spread to the streets where the muslims lived. They, too, began to pour into the grove. "What elegance!" they would exclaim. Conscious of their household duties, some women would return home, but would not be able to stay there for long. They would prepare whatever they could and rush back to the Penance Grove.

* * *

The hour of midnight struck. Excitement began to grow. An old woman, with a tender heart, came forward, folded her hands and begged of Bhai Ram Singh not to cast off his "earthly garb." The "Sant" heard it, smiled, raised his eyebrows heavenward, and again fell back into a trance.

The whole town was agitated. Excited and curious people were counting the minutes when it would strike four and they would be able to see the miracle.

That night no one slept in our town. The streets were deserted. If any sound was heard, it was that of running feet. Sometimes, a door would be opened and a voice heard: "It is already 2'o clock! Only two hours are left now! You stay on at home! If you also come away, there will be no one to look after the children!"

Everywhere in the town, this sort of thing went on throughout the night. When the sound of the husband's footsteps would recede into the distance, that of his wife's footsteps would begin to be heard.

It struck three; then half-past three. By this time, thousands of men and women were chanting hymns. Even the birds, sitting in their nests, peered at this strange spectacle.

At fifteen minutes to four, there was an ovation. The "Sant" opened his eyes; women sobbed hysterically. "The time has come! See! He has come to know of it himself."

It was still very dark. And each minute was now being counted loudly by the congregation. In our town 4'o clock is regarded as the time of daybreak.

At five minutes to four the "Sant" stood up and, with folded hands and bowed head, stepped down from the 'chowki', lay down on the ground and , putting both his hands on his chest, closed his eyes. A wave of emotion swept through the crowd. Women sobbed. Flowers began to be showered on the prostrate body of the "Sant".

At one minute to four, silence fell on the entire crowd. Not a sound was heard. Hymns were no longer being sung. Tears dried up in the eyes of the devotees as they gazed with bated breath at Bhai Ram Singh's face.

Exactly at 4'o clock, the "Sant" shut his eyes and stopped moving. People looked on, with throbbing hearts. A few of them raised their hands heavenwards and, in voices choked with emotion cried: "Gone! He has left us for ever!"

Then the headman of the town, a respectable, elderly citizen, came forward and, removing a few flowers, felt the holy man's pulse. He shook his head and said: "It is faint but it is still beating."

People were silent. All eyes were glued on Bhai Ram Singh's face.

At three minutes past four, the headman again felt the pulse, again shook his head and said, softly: "It is faint but it is still there."

The junior headman exclaimed: "These earthly watches are not reliable! When up on High it will strike four, the 'earthly garb' will automatically fall off!"

It was five minutes past four: The pulse was still beating. The headman bent down and whispered in Bhai Ram Singh's ear: "How is your Holiness?"

A faint reply came: "I am waiting. From my side I have long since cast off the body."

People were counting seconds now. Heads began to shake. Faint lines of doubt appeared on the faces. Then the junior headman shouted from where he stood: "What is the delay now, Santji?"

"I am waiting for God's command!" Bhai Ram Singh replied with his eyes still closed.

Mistrust and anger began to take the place of devotion. People began to feel they had been cheated and humiliated.

Exactly at quarter-past four, the headman shouted: "Why the delay? We are tired of waiting!"

Bhai Ram Singh folded his hands and sat up. "God is being unkind to me! What am I to do? I am waiting every moment!"

These words acted like drops of oil on a smouldering fire. The women, too, began to shout.

"See? See his game? The hypocrite!"

A few men, who had remained awake all night long and had quarrelled with their wives to come there, stepped forward, rolling their sleeves: "Rascal! Don't you know which town this is?"

Bhai Ram Singh stood up and, with folded hands, went towards the 'chowki', "Brothers, before daybreak, I shall certainly cast off my body! This is the command I have received! I would beg of you to go home."

"Will there be a second daybreak today? It has already struck four!" people shouted.

"Brothers, go home! I have not asked anyone to come here! You please go! Before daybreak..."

But people had already begun to show their fists. Their eyes were bloodshot. A few of the town's loafers came forward.

Bhai Ram Singh was alarmed. He left the 'chowki' and went and stood under a tree.

Anger broke loose as he left the 'chowki'. People rushed at the man, and began to shower blows on him. Some picked up sticks. While others picked up stones, and even shoes.

Bhai Ram Singh's illusive figure began to seek shelter now behind one tree, now behind another. But, wherever he went, he was pursued by the devotees. Who has ever succeeded in getting away from his devotees? At first there were blows and slaps but, when he began running away, stones and shoes began to be showered on him.

"Brothers, I have done no harm to any one of you!" Bhai Ram Singh shouted again and again. "Don't be cruel to me! I have served you..."

But the feelings of the devotees were running high. Of course, a few persons tried to intervene but, afraid of the stones, they fell back.

Then truly a miracle occurred, of which our townspeople talk with great pride. Just when the light of day was breaking, Bhai Ram Singh cast away his "earthly garb". His body was, no doubt, covered with mud and earth and blood, and there was a heap of shoes and stones lying round him; but that was, after all, the abandoned body, it had, in any case, to mix with dust one day.

* * *

It did not take the people long to become aware of the miracle. When the day grew bright, and the illusion of the night was dispelled, and Bhai Ram Singh's body was seen as the naked truth, someone said: "He was right, after all, wasn't he? He did cast off his body before the day broke."

"Why, it wasn't necessary to throw stones at him," another added. "He would have died anyway. We people have no patience."

And then the women put their wrappers round their necks, as is the custom. Tears began to flow profusely and the devotees again began to gather. The stones and shoes were removed and flowers began to be heaped on the abandoned body of Bhai Ram Singh. And the townspeople gave such a grand funeral to him that they rose higher even in their own esteem.

And a mausoleum was erected in Penance Grove at exactly the spot where Bhai Ram Singh had sat that day. It is a lustrous white building, so bright that it can be seen from far off. There is a dome on top of it, too, and inside the mausoleum "Santji's picture is placed by the side of a wall, and a brand-new white dress, and a pair of chappals, too, which a devotee had purchased with his own money, since "Santji's" own chappals had been lost while he was trying to run for his life.

And young and old of our town sincerely believe that, in this age, if ever there was a prophet it was Bhai Ram Singh, whom God had visited "in person" one day and escorted to Heaven.

Translated from the Hindi
by the author

Earthly Love

Nayantara Sahgal

A halo of misty light had hovered above the crown of his head yesterday and the day before at this hour before dawn. Today it shone with a quiet steady radiance that said, I am here. Moti felt its aura surround him. He sat with his eyes closed, erect and motionless on his mat. He was so engrossed in the light that his breath hardly came and went. Now it had a distinct lotus shape. Its brilliance grew like love returned, ready to flood his veins and arteries with an indescribable rapture. He struggled to regain his surroundings, and wrenched himself free of the rising enveloping torrent with a cry of pain.

Priya woke at once, calling out to him as animals unfailingly answer each other and few humans have yet learned to do. Through his lowered lids Moti was aware she had got out of bed and knelt in a huddle near him. When he opened his eyes the room looked bleak and alien, and he was trembling violently.

"Is it the light again?" she asked.

After a while he heard her. The first streak of dawn through the window brought her face into focus, such a delicate anxious oval that he made a valiant effort to smile and reassure her he was all right. To his relief the room became theirs again, his wildly beating pulse slowed and his arms and legs began to ache as sensation returned. Street sounds stirred, first singly, then in twos and threes. The colony, not yet supplied with people's daily needs, aroused itself for the exodus to the city and work. An infant next door who had wailed all night fell asleep exhausted just as crows and their companions woke. A cool early breeze lifted uncollected garbage odours and locked them into a mysterious undefinable blend. The public tap below their window would soon begin its gurgle and flow. Earth was never lovelier than at this frail magical hour.

"Are you sure you're all right?" Priya, who was not, begged, and when at last he could nod vigorously to convince her, she said, "My poorest fatty," and burst into tears. There was no other name for someone as bony and angular as him, with a slight stoop bred into his bones from a grandfather who had been a letter-writer in his village, and eyes that even in childhood had needed strong lenses. In his family reading and writing had been more important than health.

They gazed at each other in the half-dark, not touching. This mat was not for earthly love. She had understood that since their wedding night a year ago when he had left their bed sometime during the night to sit crosslegged on the mat, facing east, to turn his mind inward and lose himself in meditation until daybreak. He had warned her about it beforehand, more than once. "I hope it won't annoy you," he had apologised, the way people do for their minor vices, "It's a habit." Apart from her only his mother knew about his habit and it had come as no surprise to her. A visiting stranger had prepared her for all that was to come while Moti was still in her womb. What wouldn't women believe about their only beloved sons, Priya had thought. She herself didn't mind. He never got enough sleep, but otherwise it was nothing to worry about. This century at least was hardly teeming with visions and those who renounced the world. But the last three nights had shaken her confidence.

By six o'clock when the neighbours came to strident life Moti felt more himself. They drank their tea to the distant roar and grind of buses nearer the main road. Moti noticed his wife had spilled tea into her saucer, unusual for her. She had never betrayed a trace of nervousness during their nerve-wracking courtship. Being separated for seven waking hours, nearly eight if he counted his journey to Delhi's main branch of the Union Bank, seemed a strange and profitless way to spend a marriage.

He opened the newspaper he had not had time to read in the city yesterday and a current of shock restored his mercury to normal.

"Do you know who they've made chairman of the Great Eastern Bank?" he said, incredulous, "It's one of the banks the government nationalized last year."

"No. Who?"

"Hari Lal."

"Who's he and why shouldn't he be chairman of a bank?"

"This man has served a ten-year sentence for armed robbery. He's a *known* dacoit." Which put him in a different league from other doubtful characters doing well in high places.

Hari Lal was not an old-fashioned dacoit, hiding out in jungles and ravines and making a career of terrorizing villages. He was the happy-go-lucky city kind, a favourite with cinema-goers.

"Thank heaven it's not your bank," murmured Priya absently.

Moti didn't have the heart to explain that if a man like Hari Lal could get appointed chairman of a bank, it would be no time before an invisible network spread over the city from banks to hovels.

Moti lifted his eyebrows by way of greeting to Shiv who had the desk next to his on the huge ground floor of the Union Bank. Shiv said with a grin, "Hey professor! One year now and you're still not getting enough sleep."

Moti surveyed the room. He particularly liked the vast empty distance between the ceiling where fans turned and no flies alighted, and down here. Heavy old typewriters waited under dusty oilskin covers on desks that were already beginning to sprout files like excrescences out of the wood. More files were crammed into wall cabinets housing miles of close handwritten figures. A chaotic seeming landscape where everything was really in meticulous order, precise as jewel craft. The room's arrangement was exactly right, each of them in their appointed place. He had no quarrel with the universe as such. But the newspaper had unsettled him. Instead of getting down to work he was up against Priya's father's baffled amusement at their one and only meeting. "A degree in mathematics, is it? Nowadays low born curs have big ideas." Nobody laughed. The two convicts who were his household servants stood one on either side of Moti, awaiting the jailer's further orders. They reeked of hair oil. Certain moments in one's life can advance one's education with a thrilling suddenness, and in seconds Moti knew there were forces within these four walls he had had no inkling of. A man of caution, even a retarded idiot would have known better than to show an ounce of spirit. But fate had drawn Moti's attention to the bright red and orange fruit and flower design of the cotton rug under his feet. Priya had told him it had been woven by prisoners in the jail factory. A garden of amazing dreamlike detail met his eyes, and the idea of thieves and murderers toiling over butterflies was so intriguing that he forgot he had been brought here by force. He started to explain about his sincere love for Priya when crashing blows across his head and ears threw him off balance. Blood oozed out of his mouth. Long threads of it swayed down to join a rose in bloom on the rug.

Moti drew a file toward him but a more recent anxiety gnawed through the first column of figures. He found it impossible to decipher his own fine firm spidery handwriting beside entries and withdrawals.

"An ex-dacoit has been made chairman of the Great Eastern Bank," he said to Shiv, "What do you think?"

"That Hari Lal who served ten years for armed robbery," Shiv acknowledged cheerfully, "Easier for him to collaborate on a hold-up now."

And that might be true too.

"It could be a far-fetched rumour," Moti frowned at his indecipherable handwriting.

"Why should it be a rumour? Which planet are you on? And how does it become your problem?"

"A man like Hari Lal," repeated Moti slowly.

"The nation is on the march. Yes Sir!"

Not that Hari Lal's appointment would affect himself or Shiv or the fifty others on the ground floor with their necks bent over paper mountains. Everything would go on as before unless a Hari Lal got appointed here too. Moti stared down the room as if a dacoit-chairman in a foreign tie and shining shoes had walked in. He even heard the background music.

Shiv leaned over and nudged him. "What are you bothered about, the money in the bank?"

The whole idea had disturbed Moti, but now, with lawlessness and disorder stitched into respectable clothes, talking in respectable accents, he saw the danger to the money as a definite possibility. It was a plain crazy appointment.

Three hours later he straightened his neck, scraped his chair back and went to the food stall across the road for lunch. He should have been half sick with money worry, a continuing business, not over and done with like the deadly onslaught the jailer had punished him with. Priya's father was used to the sullen obedience of the barrack. Convict-breaking was his profession and he had not believed there were unbreakable identities and unreasonable strength. For Moti had grown an unreasonable strength some time during the long siege when it seemed Priya would never be his, when he had walked home from work in fear of an assailant in the dark, and lived in dread of what hired ruffians could do to a home when caste fever exploded. And when at the end of his tether he outgrew his strength, never able to summon it again, it returned like a mantle thrown over him. So instead of ending up battered to pulp in an alley, or floating lifeless on the Jumna, he was extraordinarily intact, in a far colony with Priya. The ruffians must have given up their search. There had been time for revenge to cool, and when he thought about it rationally he did come to the careful conclusion that he need not die a dozen deaths a day. But he had another terror, of losing Priya though she might still be with him, a marble goddess, and their marriage a wilderness where he could never deserve her.

The stall owner's assistant was lifting hot golden *gelabies* out of crackling oil and dipping them in heavy syrup. Moti turned his back on them and ate quickly. He rubbed salt on his fingers to get the grease off and rinsed his mouth of chillies. The question of what to do with the rest of the lunch break had been solved long ago by the row of shops near the bank. He had learned to spend his time in the city with his face turned away from passers-by. He was looking at the georgettes and brocades of white plaster models in a shop window when he remembered for no rhyme or reason the tone of Priya's voice and the shape of her vowels, and how he had found that curve and softness repeated down her body to her arched instep. It had become an exquisitely poignant reminder of her higher birth and the uncrossable line between them. He, who knew a boundary when he saw one, had not even realised there was one between him and Priya. He had simply reached out in loving madness and she had come to him. It was the jailer who had made Moti see he was up against the centuries, not one man's fury. He was racked by humiliation whenever he thought of it. Pain had come to stay. There were actual inches of him where pain lodged like nails driven into flesh. It would destroy them—if nothing else out of the night destroyed them first. Imminent destruction kept occurring to him again and again from different angles. If he had said it once, he had said it a hundred times, if it's going to happen let it happen, but don't let it happen yet.

Moti looked dazedly at a sequinned sari draping one of the plaster figures. He shut his eyes in intense confused longing and the lotus shimmered above his head. Cool silvery lightning flicked the base of his spine. He felt its tremors right through him. In the middle of the sidewalk Delhi vanished and joy rocked and illumined his whole being. When he returned to his senses he found his forehead leaning heavily against the shop window. The sequinned sari glinted through the sweaty patch his face had left on the glass. He tried weakly to wipe it away. Why me, he entreated, what's so special about me? The best that can be said of me is I'm a harmless sort of fellow. Leave me my earthly love. There must be others who want paradise. He limped back to the food stall and sat on a bench fanning himself with his handkerchief.

In the afternoon he had to prepare a client's statement for three months past, an incredibly untidy backlog.

"Wasn't the bank preparing statements once a month?" he asked Shiv.

"On the dot."

"Well why isn't it now?"

"Isn't it? So what? Less work. Better being nationalized." Shiv rubbed a vigorous forefinger back and forth under his nose.

"It's more work," Moti corrected, "and how is a customer to know what he's got in the bank?"

"The nation is on the march, who's got time to make bank statements? Better the customers don't know what they've got in the bank now that the dacoits are in. Part of the plan, who knows?"

"What plan?" Moti sat up with a jerk.

"I'm joking, professor," Shiv slapped his desk delightedly, "You should see your face."

Moti bent over debits and credits, sorting them out. He had to admit diligence had slackened. The room was not as clean as it used to be. The second button on Shiv's shirt was missing. He lounged across the back of his chair chatting lengthily with his other neighbour. A cigarette hung out of the corner of his mouth. His shoulders were hunched in unconscious imitation of a famous broad-shouldered six-foot screen dacoit, though Shiv roughly resembled a little peer. Moti interrupted his chat.

"When were we told not to make out monthly statements?"

"We weren't told. It must have just slipped."

A bank just slipping? Moti took off his glasses and cleaned the lenses thoroughly. "Listen to this," he said, bewildered, "A client has written to the manager that he can't make out his income tax return because we never sent him his dividend warrants."

"So? Send them now."

It was unbelievable, that was all. He had to search through a succession of files and folders until he found what he wanted. He sternly arranged the files in rigid stacks on the floor, weighted with three brass-topped inkstands, a stone paperweight and a telephone directory, while he completed his task. He was ready with dividend warrants and statement when he was sent for. The manager glanced at them and handed them to the head clerk standing by his chair, a gesture reflected in the mirror-smooth surface of his gleaming desk. The low hum of an air conditioner sank strangled into the carpet. This was only the manager. The chairman's office would be bigger, cooler, with a carpet that would stifle a murmur before it arose. He would make policy, control avalanches of money. Moti had an urgent desire to warn somebody about Hari Lal.

"Hey," said Shiv when he got back, "I *was* joking about plots and plans, but I've just remembered the story. Must have happened after you got married because you never heard a thing anybody said to you those days."

"What story?"

"When six million rupees were carried out of the Great Eastern in a trunk in broad daylight. The Transport Minister's son phoned the chief cashier to get the trunk out of the vaults and bring it along in a taxi."

"Where?"

"Under a tree along some road, I forget which, and deliver it to a man who would say a code word."

Through the haze of those days, only a year ago, Moti recalled the news item, but the recollection was vague.

"I wouldn't have dared to cart a trunk out of the bank, no written order or anything, even if the Almighty had telephoned," said Shiv.

"And then?" demanded Moti, tense with excitement.

"A reporter got hold of the story and the Minister said it was all rubbish. His son had never phoned, the press was anti-national, and there was no trunk. But trunk or no trunk, the chief cashier and the man with the code word got put in jail."

"Who *had* phoned?"

"Then the man with the code word dropped dead in jail. Heart attack, they said."

"You mean they killed him?"

"One hundred percent. He wouldn't change his story that he had acted on orders. But the chief cashier changed his and was let out. He was given a licence to start a transport service and now he's richer than a smuggler. He told my paternal uncle that somebody pretending to be the Minister's son had telephoned. It was all a hoax, see?"

"And what did the jokers do with the six million?"

"The bank alone knows," Shiv shrugged, getting ready to leave. "What I'm saying is, with dacoits as chairmen it will all be that much easier." He whistled a song from a film with a dacoit hero.

Moti's finger traced old inkstains soaked deep and permanent into the scratches on his desk.

"You had just got married then," Said Shiv, beaming benevolence, "I tried to tell you but you were deaf those days. No love-marriage for me, professor. I'll get my parents to arrange mine. How did you manage to persuade her people in the end?"

"I didn't. I couldn't. In the end we had to run away."

Shiv broke his unnatural silence with a stunned, "What have you gone and done? Caste is not a joking matter."

Moti located his bicycle in the mass of machinery anchored at the stand outside the building. He fumbled with the lock, untangling his own from surrounding metal and wheeled it to the road where he joined a solid herd of cyclists. His shoulders ached with multiple mysteries. The road became a rutted bullock cart track halfway along the forty-five minute ride home. Nothing in sight. Dry grass and stubble didn't show and he could see through and beyond the skeletal scaffolding of a giant hotel far away. Evenings always had this colourless look before the light drained out of them. While it lasted it made earth and sky one continuous blank. He might as well have been cycling to the edge of the world. A star appeared directly above his handlebars. Love, like other marvels, must be credit collected from past births, and if so, there were no un-deservers. It was a liberating idea.

He had parked and locked his bicycle when two birds bumped and fell. He picked them up and turned them over in his hands. Under the feeble bulb at the entrance he saw they were baby bats. A row of bats hung like torn rags, electrocuted along a naked overhead wire behind him. These must have brushed the brutal wire too and fallen dead, blind in the light, even twilight, poor creatures. His own happiness seemed somewhat safer from a sudden end. He laid the miniature corpses below the verandah ledge and hearing Priya's anxious "Fatty?" hurried in to find her. They rushed into the clumsiest, fiercest human embrace without a word said. Grant us more time, he prayed, have mercy. Don't let any disaster, or your own redeeming grace, catch up with us just yet.

The Accident

Sharat Kumar

The road was only four feet wide when the rocks fell. The mountain side had now been cut eight feet wide and there was enough space to arrange chairs for the Court of Enquiry. After three days of rain the sunshine was pleasant. In a month's time the first snow would fall.

Empty wooden boxes of gelatin had been piled up as a makeshift table for conducting the Enquiry proceedings. Along the road alignment, there was a mile and a half long stretch of hard rock. A tonne of gelatin was required every day for blasting the rocks. The work continued on either side of the chairs. The sound of trucks, the hissing of air flowing through rubber pipes, and the rattle of jack hammers drilling holes in the rock filled the pine forest.

It was my job to send a report on the accident to the Chief Engineer's office. I started my work early to complete it by afternoon. Bright morning sunshine held every possibility of rain in the evening.

Four men were dead. "Doctor Sahib was here. We tried to bring the bodies up. But... oh... ho... the gorge is so... so steep." The mate of the labour gang gesticulated.

The doctor explained that the bodies could not be brought to the road level. He had followed a circuitous route to the bottom of the gorge to examine the bodies for issuing the death certificates. The bodies were cremated on the river bank. The sound of the river as it hurtled four hundred below reverberated through the gorge. The mountains on either side of the gorge almost touched each other.

"This girl has had a miraculous escape," said the doctor. A pair of brown eyes smiled through the heavily bandaged head. Her nose and the part of her cheeks that showed below the bandages, were the colour of the wild apples in the orchards we had passed on the way to the site of the accident.

"I do not believe in luck," the doctor said, "but this is a miracle."

At the spot where the accident had taken place, the road was now eight feet wide. Six days earlier when it was only four feet wide there was an unexpected landslide. Mountain slopes cut for making a road take along time to stabilize again.

"I blew the whistle, Sahib," the mate said. "I was here. My daughter works with this gang."

It was hard to believe that the mate's daughter, Doma, was saved by a lone tree sprouting from a small opening in the mountain side twenty feet below the road level. Her clothes had got entangled in the branches. It sent a shiver down the spine to visualise her dangling from the branches, looking four hundred feet down into the gaping depth of the gorge. There was a cluster of pine trees a hundred feet above the river bed. We could see the tree tops swaying in the breeze. One body was recovered from this cluster.

"Everybody panicked," the mate said, "some people ran on one side of the road, and some on the other."

Four labourers and Doma had run off the road in their panic, and a miracle had saved Doma from joining the fate of the other four.

Dorju, who drilled holes in the rock with a jack hammer and packed gelatin for the blast, now sat in front of me.

"Did you not anticipate the landslide?" I asked.

"No, Sahib, If I did, I would have run away from here much earlier."

A flicker of a smile lit up the round brown eyes peeping through the bandages.

"Who would have believed that the rubber pipe could hold the weight," the doctor said. He was starting down into the gorge. "I have done many brave things in my time. But this is beyond me."

According to the official records, Doma was twenty years old. Her actual age was probably two or three years less. Small and delicate, she must weigh less than a hundred pounds. Dorju had swung down the gorge on a rubber pipe and climbed back to the road with Doma's limp body tied to his waist. It was terrifying to imagine the rescue against the backdrop of the foaming waters of the river in the far depths of the gorge.

"The rocks are solid," Dorju went on, "the blasting must have shaken them." The face wrapped in the bandages was pretty. The gentle grace of a young woman conscious of her beauty enveloped her.

It was two o'clock. The sky was dark with clouds. The clerk stamped the thumb impressions of the witnesses on their recorded statement. The doctor told me that Dona's injuries were superficial. The bandages would be off in a few days' time. I completed my report.

Six weeks later when I visited the site again on an inspection tour, the blasting of the road through the hard rock had been completed. The labour gang's tarpaulined huts had been shifted two miles ahead. The old mate saluted me with a sunny smile and informed me that Dorju had received a reward of two hundred rupees for bravery as a result of my report. He had also moved in to live with Doma.

"He drank so much *rakshi* on the day he received the reward," the old mate's eyes were sparkling with laughter. "He drank so much rice wine, Sahib, that in the middle of the night Doma threw him, bed and blanket, out of their new tarpaulined hut."

The silence of the night was broken by the screeching of the emergency brakes of a car. As I came running out of the house, a tall man in a heavy overcoat stepped out of the car. The chrome-plated handle of a bicycle lying on the road shone under the light from a street pole. The containers of a brass tiffin carrier lay scattered. The rear wheel of the bicycle, now horizontal, was still revolving.

"Did you get hurt?" The owner of the car was helping the old man on the bicycle to stand up on his feet.

The air was still. It was cold. The wan light of the crescent moon did not cast any shadows.

The old face wrapped up in a mud-coloured muffler was expressionless. The muffler passed over his head and covered his ears. He wore an old faded brown coat that could not be very warm. And a weary face with lines many years old. He stood erect without any support, my hands just holding him at his elbow. Then, suddenly his full weight was on me.

"He should be taken to a hospital," I said.

The old man steadied himself again. The automobilist looked at his watch. It was past midnight.

The old man turned for the first time to see the tiffin carrier containers scattered on the road. The rear wheel of the bicycle had stopped revolving. The front wheel was bent and damaged. The front tyre had burst. The old man's unsteady legs wobbled and his weight fell on me every now and then. The old man was perhaps on his way home after finishing his duty in the second shift of a nearby factory.

"He must be taken to hospital."

"Where do you want to go? How far is your house?" asked the car owner. The expressionless eyes remained lost, staring into the darkness of the night.

"He should be examined by a doctor. An internal injury cannot be ruled out," I said.

There was no traffic, the night was still and dark. The car stood half turned into a small lane off the main road. The front of the car had suffered a minor scratch.

Home was seven miles away. He would have cycled seven miles in the cold. There was no public transport after 11 p.m.

The old man was now in the car, half reclining in the back, one leg stretched out, unbent, stiff.

"Is your leg badly hurt?"

"Home. Bitt... Bittiya." The eyes were unmoving, still, expressionless. A numbness had enveloped his mind.

"An internal injury and shock can cause serious problems, especially in cold weather."

The car owner straightened the collar of his overcoat. "Look here! I am a rsponsible person. I hold a responsible position."

The old man with the muffler around his head lay quiet in the back seat. A whiff of stale food rose as I gathered the containers of the old tiffin carrier that lay scattered on the road. It was difficult to fit them into the handle. The cold had stiffened my fingers.

"Bitt... Bittiya." The old man muttered, dazed, his one leg stretched out, stiff. His daughter must have cooked the food in the morning. Who else would be in the house?

It was difficult to fit the cycle into the boot of the car. The rear wheel was in and the front wheel projected out. And then, the handle swung and scratched the car-body.

"Be careful!" The car owner was again straightening the collars of his overcoat.

The cycle fitted in as I turned it over. The front wheel was in, the handle bent, and the rear wheel projecting out parallel to the road.

The old man was still sitting with his leg stretched out, his eyes unblinking, expressionless. If only he would say something! As the car started with a jerk, I noticed that the bicycle wheel which projected out parallel to the road, had started revolving again.

"Poor Admiral," one cadet said to another.

"Shut up! Aren't you ashamed saying that on a day like this?"

Last-post had just been sounded on the internal broadcasting system of the slip. All the sailors were lined up on the upper deck, and the officer cadets stood in three ranks on the quarter deck. After observing two minutes' silence, the normal hustle and bustle of the ship's life was about to be resumed.

It was sunset. The shadows of tall trees swaying in the breeze disappeared as darkness advanced on the coral island closest to the bay. The water was crystal clear near the reefs, and in daylight the fish and rocks were clearly visible through five fathoms of water. In the increasing darkness of the evening, moving shoals of fluorescent fish shone against the dark waters.

Two days earlier when the ship had anchored in the shallow bay surrounding the coral islands, Paul had seen these fluorescent fish for the first time.

"They have phosphorus in them," an old sailor had told him. "These fish are much bigger near the Laccadive islands. At night, the shoals glow like Diwali lamps."

Paul's fellow cadets called him: Admiral. He had no intimate friends. He was of a different breed. He was keen to learn everything. He would soon know all about fluorescent fish. Long before the ship had entered the bay, before the first of the palm trees had risen from the depths of the ocean on the far horizon, Paul had learnt all the details of the width and the depth of the bay and where it was possible to anchor.

"Poor Admiral!" The cadets were at dinner in the mess. The afternoon's accident had cancelled all shore leave for the evening, and the mess was crowded.

"He would have become an Admiral," someone remarked at the third table.

Paul had no doubts about it that morning as he inspected the cutter hanging from the starboard davits, ready for the boat-race scheduled for the afternoon. For the last two days had thoroughly scrubbed the boat with sand and stone and then hung it for drying on the davits turned outwards over the sea.

"Still not fully dry," Paul said as he touched the planks. The sun was sharp on the upper deck. Paul was convinced that he would become an Admiral. His fellow cadets, and the officers on the training ship, believed him. After two days of holystoning, the boat shone spotlessly clean. The scoured planks showed clear veins of wood under the bright sun. The sun would evaporate all the remaining moisture within an hour and the boat would be dry and light by the time the race started.

The air was still. The bay was flat as a sheet of glass. The briny sea air and the sharp equatorial sun had burnt Paul's bare chest and his back a deep crimson. The barometer had steadily fallen since morning, and Paul knew that the still bay and the placid ocean beyond it could be transformed violently in just a few hours.

The waves were rising as the ship steamed out of the bay for the boat-race. With the sounding of the ship's gong, two lifebuoys were thrown into the sea on the port and starboard sides of the ship. The race had begun. Two groups of cadets rushed to lower their cutters from the boat deck of the moving ship into the sea. The boat hook opened just a foot above the water's surface and the boat fell with a splash on the crest of a wave and almost crashed into the ship-side.

The ship had now been left behind. The two cutters, tossing in the turbulent sea, were heading towards their respective lifebuoys. Sitting right forward, as the bowman of the boat, Paul pulled his short oar deeply through the water. Paul saw that the other boat had trailed behind. As they neared the buoy, it was his job to stretch outward from the boat and lift the buoy up in one swift movement so that the boat could turn back and race towards the ship without breaking its momentum. Paul's boat would win the race. He had always been a winner in whatever he attempted.

The lifebuoy was quite close now and Paul had pulled his oar in. He stretched out his arms, his right hand touching the water, his eyes concentrating on the buoy. Now his hand touched the buoy. And then, a huge wave suddenly lifted the front portion of the boat high in the air. And Paul was thrown out of the boat. Feeling the limitless expanse of water about him, Paul realised that the sea was more than a thousand fathoms deep at that point. Six thousand feet! As if the entire mountain range of Mussoorie, where he always spent his holidays as a child, was made of water and he was standing on its highest peak. This thought was his last link with life. Propelling himself upwards with fast strokes as he approached the surface, his head crashed into the sharp edged keel of the boat which the swirling waves had pushed vertically above him.

It was late night now, and all the cadets, excepting those on night duty, were fast asleep. Early in the morning of the next day, the ship would sail out of the bay. The sailors on night watch were preparing the ship for the seven-day long sea voyage.

Paul would not become the Admiral now. Seven days later when the ship entered the harbour, his personal effects were offloaded from the ship to be sent to his home. In a few days, his fellow cadets and officers of the ship forgot to think whether Paul would have become an Admiral. And then, they forget to think about him altogether. He disappeared in the vast timeless indifference of the sea.

Lukose's Church

Susan Visvanathan

My mother gave birth to me in a small dark room at the back of the house. The midwife was an old woman with a mustache, her hands gnarled but steady. She cut the cord with which mother and I had been linked with a flat heavy iron knife. It had no handle, and I would often look at it with dread, as it hung on the wall by two small holes inserted into nails. I had seen it cut off the heads of chickens when guests came, or at Christmas—a nonchalance of chopping which was repeated on raw mangoes, plantains, jackfruit. I had seen it, as a boy, being dipped into boiling water and taken in to my mother and her second son, so that the midwife could severe them too. Above the knife hung the fishing rods, and the long bamboo poles which mother used to knock down tamarind pods, guavas for us, and the raw mangoes she used in cooking.

I was the first son, and they named me after my paternal grandfather Lukose. My mother often told me that when I was born she was afraid, because she thought she had given birth to grandfather—my eyes were clear and open, brown and unglazed. She said that I looked at her at the very moment of my birth and that there was a perfect understanding of her. I think it was her preoccupation with grandfather and my resemblance to him that always created an intangible distance between us. She was always affectionate, but almost deferential, and she never held me close to her as she did my younger brother Behnan. It was not surprising then that when I took on ordainment, and became a priest as my grandfather and his father, and his father before him had been, she began to call me Achen, father—and it seemed the most natural thing that Lukose should once more be severed, not by the spatulate kitchen knife, but by an equally blunt act of deference by mother.

I grew up by the River Pamba. It was broad and still, and its face was different from morning to evening. Kingfishers flew low across, their wings taking on the colours of sky, light and water. Across, on the other side were the green fields of paddy, and at the edge of the river were the swaying reedlike silhouettes of sugar-cane which reflected themselves dark and ominous in the water. On our side of the river there were some large rocks, sand, and that beautiful wild plant which we call thotta vadi (touch-and-it-will-wilt). I spent many hot and lazy afternoons on the banks watching the kingfishers and waiting for mother to call.

I don't know when it was that I received the calling. Perhaps it was that day when I felt the sun burn into my blood, and yet my head was filled with a cold and shattering sense of power. I shivered as I lay on the banks and felt that God was gray and cold and violent.

When I finally rose and went inside the house I saw the darkness and comfort no longer as shelter but somehow alien. I felt that the sun was forever in my blood, I was flooded with light, and yet there was the dreadful coldness, as if I would never again belong to the world of the living.

Mother said, "You had better eat some food. Don't lie in the sun all afternoon. You should rest inside the house."

We ate our meal in silence. Father never spoke, and while he was gentle to mother, and always affectionate, he went about his duties as if language had never been made. I think it was because he managed the fields, the commerce, the workers alone. We were too young, and to mother he never spoke about anything. He ate the food that she cooked, and always seemed to delight in it, he said his prayers when all of us gathered in the evenings in a gentle monotone. I think he felt that Grandfather was still there. (I remember waking up one night and seeing father staring at us as we slept on the mats. In the moonlight his face seemed strange, as if he were trying to possess us, understand us—what he did not dare to do when we were awake. When he saw me awake, he turned his head.)

That evening, when we had eaten, Father gave me the Bible to read and what I found was a verse which said, I remember, "Thou hast known me from my mother's womb." Perhaps that was when I knew I would serve God and in His house. There was a church that was my right to serve, where grandfather had served. I would go in apprentice to my father's brother who now celebrated the Holy Eucharist there. He was an old man, venerated by all. I was nine years old. I told no one that day, though in some strange way my father understood that I would not afterall engage in agriculture. He said it that very day, "I wanted to begin teaching you the Accounts. I think Behnan can do that when he grows. Learn the psalms well."

So I was left alone to dream by the side of the river, only appearing at evening to recite a psalm, as the family and servants knelt on the yellow fraying reed mats.

When I went to study with father's brother, Malpan Andreyos, I was thirteen years old. Mother made a white cloak-like dress for me—

not quite like a priest's *Kuppayam* or cope but similar enough. She stitched a small round cap of some bright black velvet. It felt warm and snug on my head, already a second skin. It was animal-like on my head and when I took it off at night I felt bare and uncomfortable. Mother did not cry, becasue she said that she had known of this moment from the time of my birth. Father held my hand for a moment—that unaccustomed gesture of affection shook me. His hands were cold, dry, without life almost and we were both embarrassed by my tears which fell on his thin fingers. Behnan was nowhere to be seen, though we heard his voice distantly from the coconut groves. I looked towards the river, as I departed with my maternal uncle. It was a cloudy day, the river looked black and the sugar-cane shivered against the water. The house too closed itself to me, the wooden lattice work dropping from the roof like thin creepers were inward looking; the old Persian Cross reflected candle-light bleakly from the door—it was a carving of the cross through which I as a child loved to put my fingers through, till one day they got stuck and mother beat me, while Behnan laughed and stood on his head with delight. The shadows of the mango tree had fallen on the wall, the light was both golden and dull, a storm was on its way.

My mother's brother held my hand, and accompanied me to the malpan's house. This uncle was a tall man, and I found it difficult to walk, chained by his affection. Yet in him I saw both tenderness and authority and I loved him.

"Eat well. Andreyos forgets sometimes when he is at his books."

"Will you come to see me often?"

"Lukose, you know my work does not allow me much time. I will come after Lent."

"Will you bring me mangoes from your field?"

"Is that all you want?"

"Bring me a cat too, and mulberries."

When we reached the malpan's house it was locked. I looked in through the barred window—the room was dark, musty, there was a table with a clean white cloth on it. After calling "Andreyos Accha!" several times, my mother's brother Mathappi went to the cottage near the gate. A woman came out, and looked at us for a minute before she went in again. While we waited, a man with a grizzled head, and a thin bent body emerged.

"Who is it?"

"I have come with Lukose Achen's grandson."

"So this is Andreyos Achen's brother's son. How he has grown! Well, Achen is not here. You know me—I look after the graves. You can sit in the church if you like, it is open. Andreyosachen has gone to a marriage in the next village. He wil be back before night."

Mathappiachen, as I called him, held my hand and the small bundle of clothes my mother had given me, and we went into the church. The church had been built by my grandfather in 1880, the date was written under the cross above the door. It said 1055. The light had changed again. We sat in the back, on a reed mat, having left our shoes outside. I looked at the altar where I would learn to serve, and felt a deep sense of dread. What mysteries were hidden here? I felt that I would die. The malpan was a stranger to me—an ascetic learned old man, saintly almost.

As Mathappiachen and I sat there the setting sun entered through the western door. The light was everywhere. I could see nothing for the white light. I tried to rise but I was helpless. I prostrated myself forty times, till my knuckles were dark with dust. I knew at the end of it that the lamp hanging from the rafters was lit and that I would one day celebrate the sacrifice, here, in this small lime-washed church.

Mathappi looked at me after my prayers were over, and said, "I have a long journey over the water. My boatman will be impatient. Stay here—you are safe. Andreyosachen knows you are to join him. I will go now."

He kissed my brow, and held me by my shoulders. I said nothing.

When Andreyosachen came back he looked tired and frail. He saw me watching the shadows thrown by the swinging, flickering lamp, touched my shoulder to guide me, saying nothing. I think he too felt that the priestly line would continue, it was necessary at least for grandfather's sake, but his face was stern, a sense of horror at the closeness he would have to enter into with a young boy.

He showed me to my room in silence. It was very small, having but one window and a narrow bed.

"We will speak tomorrow."

"I am happy to be with you, Father."

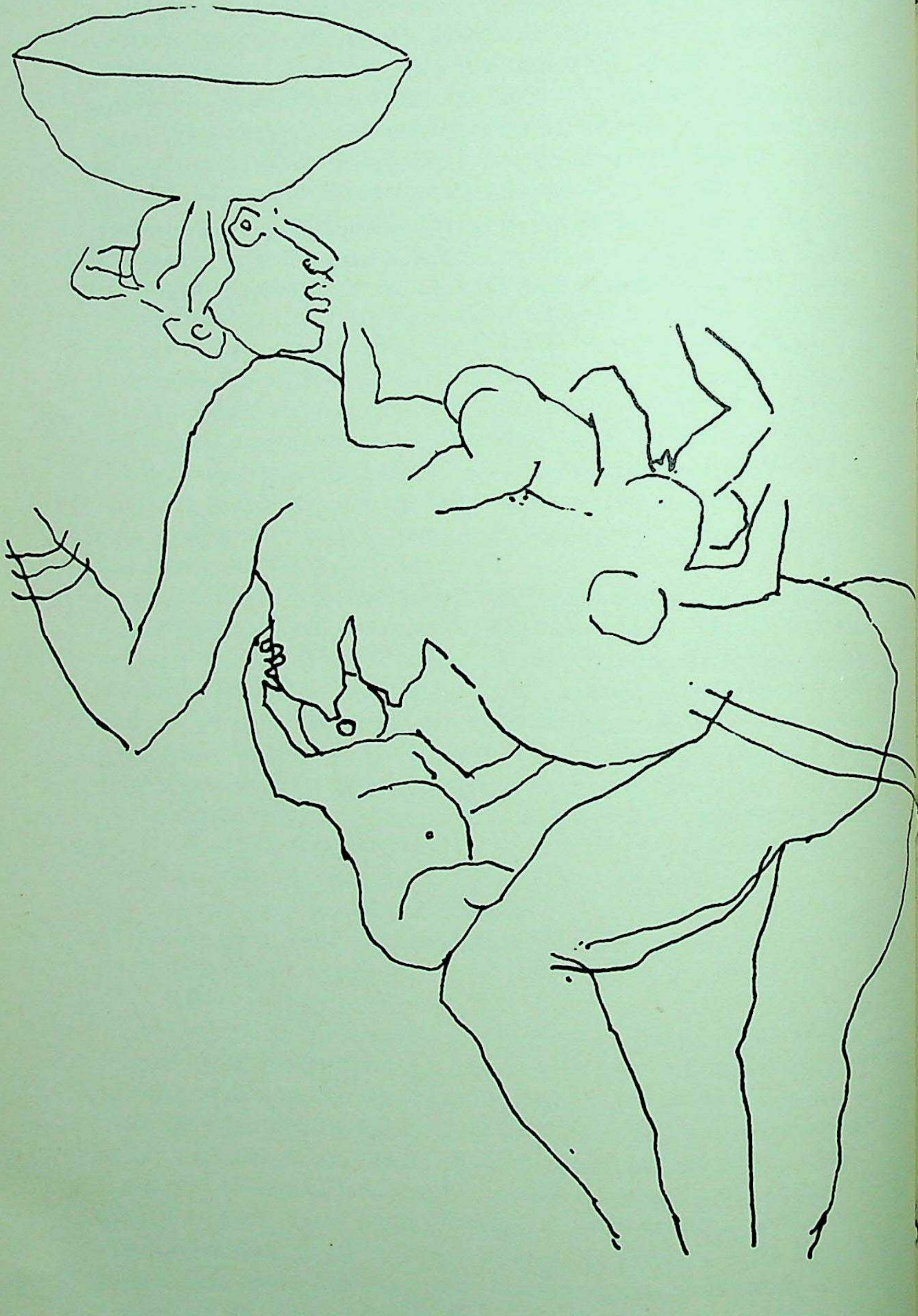
"We will see. Have you brought your prayerbooks?"

"I knew them by heart."

"I will hear tomorrow."

My bed was hard and narrow, but I fell asleep. I woke to the chiming of bells. It was barely dawn. I ran to the river and washed, listening to the birds as they called. When I went inside the small dark house of my uncle the priest, I found there was no food. I longed for the bitter black coffee, tinged with the flavour of wood smoke that my mother made for us. For a moment I thought, "The old priest hasn't spoken to me, I can still go back." I saw the little bridge over Pamba that separated the two hamlets, saw myself running over it, never to return to the church built in 1055 of the Malayalam era. I would marry, father would build a house for me, I would walk in the rice-fields and the slopes of tapioca and pepper that were mine.

Then I smelt the frankincense. It was bitter and fragrant and came to me from the windows of the church. I heard the calling out of the priest "Kyrie Eleison", Lord have mercy, and I went to join him. He was dressed in robes of gold, his feet shod in red velvet shoes. The church was empty as I kissed the steps and the pillars of the altar. He blessed me with his handcross, and I became like him a servant, eager to see God, hardly ever succeeding in my desire, yet everyday crying "Barekhmore" to the people so that by standing at attention they would understand his revelation. At that moment, neither church nor priest, nor the world even, had significance and that was the truth.



BOOK REVIEWS

Private Face of a Public Person—
A study of Jawaharlal Nehru
Aruna Asaf Ali, in association
with G.N.S. Raghavan,
(under the auspices of the Nehru
Memorial Museum and Library);
Radiant Publishers, New Delhi;
pp. 128; Rs. 100.

1989 is the birth centenary year of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, architect of modern India, and world statesman. As is to be expected, a good deal is being written, debated and discussed about the contribution of Nehru to national and international affairs. All the same, this study is welcome for its shift in focus. As the title indicates, this is a study of Nehru as a person as he reveals himself in his writings, letters and speeches.

Nehru has talked about himself in his books and letters published in his time. What makes this study significant and interesting is that it has had access to hitherto unpublished material such as the Jawaharlal Nehru papers which Indira Gandhi presented to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. These papers include letters received by Jawaharlal from friends in India and abroad. Also utilised is new information contained in the NMML's Oral History project or reminiscences of many persons who had known Nehru. Another factor is that the author, a revolutionary freedom fighter, had known Jawaharlal well and had even crossed swords with him. This personal knowledge and experience vivifies the portrait, and it emerges in fuller form and colour.

Jawaharlal's concern and interest covered the entire gamut of human relationships, ranging from the individual to the whole of humankind. He himself explains it in a letter he wrote to his wife, Kamala, on 19 July 1935: "I plunged deeply into politics and became a politician. Yet my attention was always drawn towards other problems which are the real problems of this world like human relationships—the relationship between man and man, and between man and woman, or the attitude of adults towards children. Taking together all these relationships, what should be the relationship among the people within a nation? How can there be maximum mutual cooperation? And, ultimately, what should be the relationship between nations? These questions are bigger than mere politics."

Aruna Asaf Ali's study probes these relationships of Jawaharlal—with his parents; his wife Kamala;

his daughter Indira; his son-in-law Feroze Gandhi; his sisters and nieces; his friends, Indian and foreign, among whom were Padmaja Naidu, Frances Gunther, Edwina Mountbatten and Madame Chiang Kai-shek; his guru Gandhiji; the people of his country and of the world. And the probe brings out tellingly the values Jawaharlal Nehru cherished and his philosophy of life which were reflected in his public life: equal rights for women, social justice and progress based on broad compassion. And all this defined by scientific temper, spirituality and the sensitivity of a poet.

Jawaharlal's humane and humanistic ideas had an appeal far beyond the borders of India. Foreigners who had never met him but had only read his writings, came under his spell. One such person was Jean Frost of New York who, after reading Jawaharlal's autobiography published under the title *Towards Freedom,* wrote to him: "You have given me a great deal to think about.... I want to do my share towards making the world a decent place to live."

It redounds to the greatness of Jawaharlal that his private face was not greatly different from his public face, that he was animated by the same lofty concerns both as a person and as a public figure.

The study makes absorbing and thought-provoking reading. Explanatory notes given by the author will help readers who may not be familiar with all details about Nehru and the men and women in his life. The slim volume carries a Foreword by Shri R. Venkataraman, President of India, who had been a parliamentary colleague of Jawaharlal. This adds to our understanding of Jawaharlal Nehru. Readers are likely to agree with Shri R. Venkataraman's remark about "a special quality or flavour" of Aruna Asaf Ali's study of Jawaharlal Nehru, "marking it at once as a book and a conversation."

G. Venkataraman

Creations:
Mrinalini Sarabhai;
Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd.;
Ahmedabad; price not mentioned.

What strikes one at the very outset are excellent printing, exquisite lay-out and arresting dance images that linger long in the memory. One browses through the book again and again for its inviting material that compells one to look at the various dance creations of a senior dancer who charted her own path, after having mastered the techniques from the greatest gurus in Bharatanatyam and Kathakali.

Mrinalini Sarabhai is a name to reckon with in the world of dance. Trained by Pandanallur Minakshisundaram Pillai, Kattumanar Koil Muthukumar Pillai, Conjeevaram Elappa in Bharatanatyam and the great Kunju Kurup and others in Kathakali, Mrinalini was also fortunate to study at Santiniketan and take part in the dance-dramas of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore when the poet was alive. She had some training in western dance and also Javanese dances, in theatre and speech in the United States.

Gifted with innate aesthetics she has received worldwide exposure as a poet, a creative writer, a dancer and a choreographer; she has expressed herself through various media and has enough reason to look back with pride and joy. She shares some of these moments with us in her *Creations.*

The text is simple, lucid and easy to follow. Some of the truths are spelt out in the simplest expressions. For instance, speaking of folk dancing executed in a circle she mentions: "Most folk dancing is executed in a circle. There is a complete unity about the circle. Each person is connected to the other which makes for identification of the individual with the whole. Each one faces the centre, the locus, which gives the dancer the feeling of relationship or self-identification with the core...... the circle and the centre remain the eternal symbols of the sublime wisdom of the individual being." Mrinalini illustrates this with the *Rasalila* sketch where Krishna takes as many forms as there are gopis.

As a choreographer she reflects: "The choreographer does not merely accept a movement but tries to understand and analyse the *why* of it.... purity is not necessarily *old* or *new*. It is a comprehension of the basic vocabulary, an identity with the source, an intuitive wisdom."

When she launched her first creative work *Manushya,* a simple story of man from birth to his final journey based on Kathakali but minus the traditional costumes, colouring of face etc, she created waves. She expressed her innermost thoughts for the compulsion of creativity succinctly: "Creative activity is a presentation in understandable terms of what we are, a picture of man's inner aspirations, joys and sorrows. Artists register not only the world outside in their work, but also the deep unknown world inside, farther perhaps than those outer spaces which have already been reached... It is the artist who is the courageous one, who paints what he sees and feels. Yet, if truly creative, he is able to transcend that terrible chaos. Artists have to face challenges with integrity, using every vestige of knowledge, of technique to translate what they perceive into a meaningful entity. They have to see the chaos not only in the context of our times but in a completeness of universal meaning, and to bring to that desolation some affirmation of life."

This note of affirmation of life informs Mrinalini's works—her creations. She has not deviated from the tradition, but explored it and further enriched it, remaining rooted in it. Her nearly fifty productions ranging from *Vasant Vijayam, Manushya, Meghduta, Matsya Kanya, Kuravanji* to *Surya* and *Ganga* are an eloquent testimony to her fount of creativity and an ability to express through dance the innermost feelings in a telling manner.

The excellent photographs with Chatunni Panicker in *Matsyakanya*, with her daughter Mallika in *Tasher Desh* and *Mira*, of the group in *The song of creation*, innovative interpretation of *Shakuntala,* of agony in *Memory is a ragged fragment of eternity*, touching upon the theme of suicide; of *Chandalika* where she deals with the problem of Harijan, the untouchables; of, *Parashakti* referring to problems of environment; of pollution in *Ganga* through mythological stories and symbols raising issues of what man is doing to the life-giving source, are a pleasure to look at. The colour illustrations are evocative and so are the black and white. In particular, the photographs by Raymond Charpentier match the mood of the creative dancing. In particular, the one on page 17 catching Mrinalini's profile aglow with light and perspiration and on the jacket with an arm raised.

The dance as a visual art when translated into a book poses problems. With the advanced technology and facilities for better printing, a rare sensitivity and a collaborative work, the present volume under review is a must on a dance buff's shelf. There is a brief introduction by Buckminster Fuller which sums up Mrinalini's works of a life time: "...she is a philosopher, an historian, an artist. She says everything that artists, philosophers, historians, and people who are in love with life have to say, all in her conceived dances and her dancing of them. Her dancing is about all humanity... delightful to watch and regeneratively inspirational. She is also an inspiring teacher, for which we are grateful."

The book does not mention the price as is the current practice in case of art publications. However the content and the expression, the end-product in case of this book are worth the price if it is within the reasonable limits for the *aficionados* of dance.

Sunil Kothari

Japji: Meditation in Sikhism: 1✓
translation and commentary by
Swami Rama;
The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the USA, Pennsylvania; 1987; pp. 104; $ 5.95.

Preceding the writing of Sukhamani Sahib in his own meditative way as the English rendering, Swami Rama has translated the Japji. Actually they both go together for anyone wants to truly get the feel and sensitivity of the divine verse, containing the quintessence of the Sikh philosophy and prescribing the Sikh way of life. Written originally in Punjabi, Japji has been rendered into English by M.A. Mecauliffe, Dr. Gopal Singh. Khushwant Singh, Professor Gurbachan Singh 'Talib' and a number of others. Swami Rama's rendering is an authentic capturing of the spirit of the original through his own meditations. It is interesting to note that in his wanderings in Tibet, the Punjab and the Himalayas, Swami Rama was asked by one Gudhri Baba of the Guru Nanak order to do this, in a practical manner for the world to get the message. This he has done in a splendid manner, faithfully and without losing the poetic qualities. Such verse is part of the Bhakti movement of the fifteenth century to which Guru Nanak Dev belonged along with Kabir, Ravidas, Jaidev, Namdev, Farid, and several others.

Swami Rama's translation of the text is preceded by a lengthy statement on meditation as conceptualized by the Sikh scriptures albeit it would seem to be in line with the translator's deep understanding of the Vedantist tradition. "The One Reality/Eternal Name/ Creator Principle/Without Fear/ Without Abrasiveness/Eternal Form/Unborn/Self-Existent/ Known by Guru's Grace/Remember His Name/True in the Beginning/Has Even Been/Is True Now/Nanak says:/Ever Shall Be Eternal". This is the universal tradition that declares the divine nature of the human spirit, to be realized through meditation, as practiced by the sages. It is a complete science of self-trasnformation and self-discovery, that allows one to explore the deepest levels of one's being and to know the centre from which consciousness flows. From this one attains peace and harmony both within and without. All this is well stated in Part I of this book.

Swami Rama tells us about "meditation", an experience which has given rise to all the great spiritual traditions of the world: nay, even in the creative fields of the arts and the sciences. But in the former there is a deliberate attempt to fathom the nature of the mind experientially, and to reach 'reality' by calming the mind—by purifying it, making it quite transparent, so that it reveals all that is already there. It is a way of attention, of attending to thinking, speaking and acting from this inner perspective which gives life a dynamic meaning. "Through stillness, diaphragmatic breathing, the releasing of muscle tensions, breath awareness, and finally the resting of the mind in an internal focus, the meditator gathers experience of his own essence".

So, to begin with one has to learn about the body, to learn the correct way of breathing, in order to reach a state of mind which is called 'the joyous mind' through the method of 'Sushumna applicaton' as Swami Rama calls it. This is the *kundalini* way to make the breath harmonious which makes one 'mindful', in tune with '*Soham*' mantra to make the mind strong, secure, and one-pointed. The shorter version of the *mul mantra* is Sikhism, *Sat Nam Sri Wahe Guru*, is inhaled and exhaled constantly with the breath. "This helps the aspirant in forming a habit and finally making that which is called *ajap japa* (soundless and automatic remembering of the mantra) a part of daily life. Guru Nanak Dev highly recommends these practices of inner remembering."

The poetry of Japji reveals its meditative origins, its words express a deep longing and devotion for realization. Guru Nanak expounds the ideal of a fully civilized person who lives holistically, with inner awareness of the Lord and with the purpose of serving all selflessly. It is far from intellectualism, nor is it a fanatical, self-righteous appeal, or appeal to formalism, useless ritualism, renunciation and so on, so common today.

"At the point of ecstasy/the song divine is sung./The self is cleansed and listens/as the unstruck bell is rung,/All desire dissipates, the mind with God's name thrilled;/Disturbance gone, in silence/is one's very being filled/ One's senses all complete their task,/the mind is safely bedded./ Nanak salves for him in whom/the self with Self is wedded."

S.C. Malik

Sukhamani Sahib: Fountain of Eternal Joy:
tanslation by Swami Rama, with an introduction by K.S. Duggal; The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the USA, Pennsylvania; 1988; pp 274; $ 10.95.

This is a beautiful English rendering of the Prayer of Peace, an inspiring hymn composed by the fifth Sikh Guru, Shri Arjan Dev who lived from 1563–1606. This poem forms a part of the Holy Granth Sahib, which was also compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, and is recited in the morning each day to elevate the heart and soul of man. In Guru Arjan's life and martyrdom, one sees the peak of all that Guru Nanak and the three Gurus following him stood for. They combined in themselves the best of Islam and the best of Hinduism; they were peace-loving, devoted to meditation, prayer, and the service to their fellow men. Guru Arjan's non-violence ways were to usher in a new era of Saint-Soldiers with Guru Hargobind, that eventually culminated in the turbulent times of Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Arjan Dev lived in terrible times too, with forces of evil and hatred all around that lead to a great deal of pain and suffering and torture for him personally and for his followers. Nevertheless, he carried on his work with serenity and equanimity, such as completion of the Holy Tank called Amritsar, the Harimandir and the compilation of the Holy Granth Sahib which was to serve as a spiritual lighthouse ever since its completion. It is truly worth pondering how he adhered to non-violent ways throughout, and to have to compile such inspiring and beautiful Psalms. It is not merely faith, but the total acceptance of the Divine and His Will, practised in everyday life without escaping into wilderness. Guru Arjan was an householder, who raised a family, and was active as a leader to his people during a time of great opposition and strife. But he lived without indulgence or wealth. It is this total sincerity of following the Universal Truth that brings peace, tranquillity, and contentment to the seeker. Since external unity may come about only with inner joy and contentment and peace, it is this transforming power of the sense of oneness of the Divine Name that is expressed so touchingly in these poems.

The hymn Sukhamani is composed of twenty-four cantos, each of which is followed by eight stanzas. "It is a lofty and soaring statement of the beauty of the Divine in all things, and as such, soothes the mind and provides solace for those who feel themselves tossed by the storms and winds of life". Each human being has to realise for oneself this purity and union within his own mind and heart then, in truth to include all with love, excluding no one. One may cite a few examples of some of the universal truths so clearly translated in English by Swami Rama:

A man who thinks himself the doer
Never finds peace, that is sure.
Taking credit for what has been
attained,
Man wandering from life to life in
pain.

Mistaking the Lord as friend and
enemy,
Your mind will always be full of
debris.
As long as worldly joys attract
one,
Suffering shall come from divine
correction.

Nanak says:

Illusion's bonds break by the
Lord's grace,
With guru's kindness man can
himself abase.

And another:

God's world-play is entirely
without end;
Not even angels know what it does
portend.
A child cannot fathom his father's
source;
On God's will men are strung like
beads, perforce.
Servants with knowledge,
meditation and wisdom alone;
Realize the presence of His name,
which they do intone.
All others are led astray by the
sense;
To transmigration they must
acquiesce.

Nanak says:

Visions high and visions low
belong to the Lord
God decides just how far mankind
can explore.

S.C. Malik

Rhythms: Collection of short fiction:
Lakshmi Kannan;
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
(Translated from the original in Tamil by the Author); 1986;
pp. 146; Rs. 75/-.

The spurt of Indian writing written either in regional languages, translated into English, or directly in English, that has ever taken the common reader in India in recent years, has most often been a short story. Perhaps this is indicative of something important. There are other forms, verse notably, in which it appears with a note of protest or acerbity or a demand for recognition of an identity, but the short story makes a repetitive appearance that will not be denied. The authors of these short stories, none of them altogether negligible, are often women and young women.

Lakshmi Kannan is a writer in Tamil who translates her own work into English. The English is not, by English standards, faultless but it is always readable, and would seem deliberately to retain the strong South Indian flavour of its original source. Her stories are often directly about women whom she knows very well in those subtleties in which women recognise one another, that one is tempted to see her as both a feminine and a feminist author. She would probably reject the first description, accept the second. For she does not insist that women are distinctively women, and so different *en bloc* from men; but she does constantly make her women ask "Who am I?" "What am I doing here?" and, in capitals, "WHO IS SHE?"

Where this is her main concern in the present collection of 15 short stories and a novella, she does very well indeed. Her young women are generally well educated, often professionals, critical of themselves and their societies, the men they work with and marry, see life steadily even if they are too realistic to attempt to see it whole. This is true of Nandini in *Shell*; of Sushila in *Moorings*; of Shoba in *A Pea in the Mattress*. All three are for the reader of 1987 "new women". All of them have character and distinctive personalities—they are not the same women in ingenious new costumes. But they have certain very healthy-for-our-times attitudes in common. They are clear-headed, can see themselves without morbidity or vanity; can see others—husbands, would-be lovers, also with clarity. Because they see clearly, they recognise where obligation ends and a right begins. They know themselves for people capable of growth, and they choose for associates men capable of helping them to grow. They have the deep basic serenity that we have come to expect of Indian women, but they also have a new conception of where to stop giving. They are critical of the traditional role of self-abnegation that places women on a man's pedestal. There is about them all the genuine capacity for workaday exchange of experience and comradeship that makes part of today's life, and that should make them attractive to freedom-loving and fair-minded men.

When Ms. Kannan approaches more complex themes like dying and death (*Pain; Mangal's Requiem*) and schizophrenia—*Glass Walls*—she is at once less good and more ambitious, and one's reception of her work is therefore ambiguous. In *Pain* Padma is dying of cancer. The *recit* is shadowy with the forms of two young daughters, and a kind but receding husband. Padma is real and unlike the three dynamic young women of the woman-conflict stories mentioned earlier, but she is not quite as real as someone should be who has touched the further shore of living. Her pain is obsessive, but it does not distil the identity of Padma, separate it from her cancer and, to this extent, the story fails. In *Mangal's Requiem* we have an unusual (for Ms. Kannan) heroic farewell of a man condemned to die, with a poem for his young wife and old mother, and another poem that is his apologia before God. Neither woman finally understand what Mangal has written while he is awaiting death, but it is enough that he and we do. There probably are men such as Mangal, whom the world has written off, who know how to die gallantly, but I wonder if Ms. Kannan has over-met them. One feels the same sense of partial dissatisfaction with her portrait of a schizophrenic, Aditya, in *Glass Walls*. There are frontiers of experience that the author has not explored sufficiently but she does desire to enter them, and this is something in her favour. The novella *Glass Wall* does not come off as much because Aditya's disparate elements never seem to cohere for long enough to make him credible, as because his father's notion of *moksha* introduces an alien element of the comic, that acts as an irritant.

Ms. Kannan is sensitive when writing of children and teenagers. *A Promise* is good writing that underscores the distance between innocence and experience, spontaneity and convention, instinct and controlled sensibility.

There are other stories in this small collection that are readable and were worth writing, but I have chosen to comment specially only on those that offer promise of growth. For, of course, Lakshmi Kannan will grow.

Muriel Wasi

Glimpses of Telugu Literature: Leaders and Landmarks;
D. Anjaneyulu;
Writers Workshop, Calcutta.

In the introduction to his book *Glimpses of Telugu Literature: Leaders and Landmarks*, author D. Anjaneyulu makes his position clear at the very outset. He declares: This is not a work of academic research, though hard work has gone into the preparation of many of the essays. Footnotes and cross-references as also bibliographies and other insignia of academic methodology do not find a place here. For they might only serve to impede or interrupt the flow of the reader's attention.

Anjaneyulu has been writing for the last 40 years. He has been a journalist and a critic, an author and biographer. And in all fairness it must be said that he remains true to his intentions. Or, to put it another way, the work under review is expounded the way it has been, deliberately. Therefore to carp would be hitting below the belt. In the course of 30 chapters the book presents pen portraits of about 22 individuals, including poets, story-writers, playwrights, journalists, scholars, lexicographers, critics. Eight chapters are devoted to issues concerning Telugu literature. The book has been written in a lackadaisical style that makes for quick reading. It gives a very general idea of the personalities in Telugu literature and makes a casual reference to trends.

Although Writer's Workshop, Calcutta, publishers of the book have classified it in their Greybird category reserved for reference material, it cannot be considered reference material. It serves the needs of a curious layman—that is all. It does not naturally lead on to a desire for further study/research on the subject. Information is minimal, it offers the occasional critique. The absence of detail is, therefore, a drawback, despite what the author says in the Introduction.

Of course, in the light of paucity of literature in English on the subject, it does bridge a gap. But reviewed in isolation, it falls short of certain basic requirements. And a bibliography, a list of writers' works and critical writings on them—these are basic to even a small paper on such a subject.

The chapter on the writers carries a brief sketch of the life and a slightly longer account of works, with some samples of writing. The individuals Anjaneyulu mentions are: Potana, Vemana, Kshetrajna, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, D.V. Krishna Sastri, Viswanatha, Sri Sri, Nandhuri Subba Rao, Dasarathi, C. Narayana Reddi, Bairagi, P.V. Rajamannar, Bhamidipati Kameswara Rao, P. Padmaraju, Butchi Babu, Illinda Saraswati Devi, C.P. Reddy, G.V. Sitapati, Tapi Dharma Rao, Srivaatsava, Mutnuri Krishna Rao, V.R. Narla. The other chapters discuss D. Visalakshmi's novel *'Grahanam Vidichindi'* lexicographers, trends in literary criticism, impact of socialist ideology on Telugu literature, social consciousness in the Telugu novel, literature of protest and the state of modern writing. They are, in the final analysis, all too brief and not sufficiently evaluative.

A word about the translations used to illustrate the essays—it is presumed these have been translated from the original Telugu. They have not been attributed to anybody—although in a couple of places the author has pointed out that those particular samples were his own translations. There is a sameness about them that indicates that he has probably translated all the illustrations himself. While some read well, a good many sound forced and jarring, showing the writers themselves in a poor light. Of course, the act of translation is a process of creation in itself and the best of works invariably suffer in translation even in the hands of the most competent.

Another point to note is the titles of some of the chapters. To cite a few examples: "D.V. Sastri: His Muse and Message"; or "Bairagi: Poet of the Human Predicament"; or "Tapi Dharma Rao: The Seasoned Sceptic". They are not entirely substantiated by the contents of the essays.

The author compares the writers with Milton, Sartre, Coleridge, Neruda, Shakespeare... and the use of certain phrases and certain other overtones recalls something familiar, invests the reader with a sense of *deja vu*. This aids in the process of reading, nonetheless.

The book itself is competently done, but there are more than the acceptable number of spelling errors, printer's devils no doubt. However, there is no excuse for this. Also, the folio line is wrong through a whole chapter. The essay on great lexicographers of Telugu carries the line "V.R. Narla: A New Force in Telugu". Incidentally, the book is dedicated to Narla, being a "friend, fellow-writer, father-figure".

Anjaneyulu's mentor would, it is certain, be very pleased if he used this book as the spring-board to a researched, detailed, critical history/appraisal of Telugu literature.

Sandhya Rao

INDIAN HORIZONS: Statement of ownership and other particulars.

FORM IV

(See Rule 8)

1. Place of Publication	Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002
2. Periodicity of its publication	Quarterly
3. Printer's Name	Lalit Mansingh
(Whether citizen of India?)	Yes
Address	Director General, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, I.P. Estate, New Delhi.
4. Publisher's Name	Lalit Mansingh
(Whether citizen of India?)	Yes
Address	Director General, ICCR, Azad Bhavan, I.P. Estate, New Delhi.
5. Editor's Name	Ashok Srinivasan
(Whether citizen of India?)	Yes
Address	Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, I.P. Estate, New Delhi.
6. Names and address of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or share holders holding more than one per cent of the total capital	Lalit Mansingh, Director General, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, I.P. Estate, New Delhi.

I, Lalit Mansingh, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: 28.2.1989

Lalit Mansingh
Publisher

Musings on Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* Film

Krishna Chaitanya

In fairness to those who happen to chance upon this paper, I should say that it is by a person who may in all probability be slightly mad and in any case is a fetishist who believes that the longest epic of the world is also its greatest philosophical poem. After attempting a reconstruction of thought from the concept of the particle to that of the psyche in a pentalogy (1972-82) on the philosophy of freedom, I discovered that the attempt was anticipated two millennia ago by the *Mahabharata* and especially by its inset dialogue, the Gita. Therefore I wrote a literary study of the epic (1985), followed up with a *Gita for Modern Man* (1986) and am now working on a book to be entitled *The Betrayal of Krishna*, referring thereby to the later and still-continuing subversion of the meaning of the Krishna myth as it was deepened by Vyasa. This crime record is fair warning to the reader that he has run into somebody who is likely to run down every new presentation of the Mahabharata story as another variation in the long tradition of misrepresentation.

Myth is often a reaching beyond analytical reason and through poetic intuition to the sensing of reality. But there is low myth and there is high myth; and even the latter comes to us with unhappy accretions. That is why Santayana said that it is only when a creative poet rehandles antique myth that the message shines out clear, cleansed of all impurities. It is then that myth, as Slochower has pointed out, addresses itself to the problem of man's identity, the ontology of his origin and his telos, in other words to the great issues of creation, quest and destiny. It is in the alembic of Vyasa's poetry that the Krishna story was refined to high myth. But many currents had flowed into it, currents representing low myth, about the folk-hero of superhuman prowess and virility. Through Sisupala's vitriolic diatribe against Krishna on the occasion of the suzerainty ceremony of the Pandavas, Vyasa totally rejected this low myth. But the subsequent literary tradition, practically without exception, forgot the Krishna of the Gita and I know at least fifty massive Sanskrit Kavyas (epic narratives) that live on the low myth.

And B.R. Chopra's serial now on in the Indian television has taken such episodes from the *Harivamsa* and the *Bhagavata Purana,* much later texts, and incorporated them into its presentation of the *Mahabharata.* Here then is my first salutation to Brook. He has not made his film a millicolossal—the brittle-bright ad copy neologism links directly with Cecil B. De Mille—presentation of low myth but has preserved its quality as high myth.

Vyasa's creative rehandling transformed a heroic lay, a *chanson de geste*, into a poem of the most profound existential verities. That is why Burnouf called it the greatest poem of the world, T.S. Eliot regarded it as one of the two greatest poems (the other being the *Divina Commedia)* and Friedrich von Schlegel called Vyasa "first of all poets, interpreter of the numinous". Therefore, even though like other epics of antiquity the *Mahabharata* too seems to heave up like a gigantic warship from the stormy seas of old legend, we have to be ever mindful of a radical difference. If Plato did not want poets in his ideal polity which in one sense was an anticipation of Augustine's *Civitas Dei,* people like Jaynes and Havelock have clarified the reasons. As Jaynes points out, in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* the beginnings of actions are not in the consciousness, volitional freedom and moral responsibility of men but in the whims of the gods. "Not I was the cause of the act, but Zeus and the Erinyes who walk in the darkness", says Agamemnon, and Achilles agrees. The Greek psyche was conditioned by this world-view of the epics which represented tradition. Plato wanted men to be capable of autonomy in the present instead of being shackled to the past. Havelock says: "This amounts to accepting the premise that there is a 'me', a 'self', a 'soul', a consciousness which is self-governing and which discovers the reason for action in itself." Let us recall that it is tradition, including 'revelation', that Arjuna cites in rationalising his abdication of action and responsibility and that Krishna rejects the authority of such tradition which, in the Indian context at that time, tied action to ritual with the Skinnerian fetters of reward and punishment, here and hereafter. Krishna's basic message was the same as the Delphic advice to Socrates: "Know thyself! Depending on failure or success in that enterprises, the self will become the betrayer or redeemer of the self.

It is this perception the makes the episodes of the epic archetypal history and universalises the poem, making its message valid for all climes, all epochs. Here, once again my tributes to the fine strategies by which Brook has brought out the universality of the epic. The international cast was a daring experiment here and its absolute success is clear in the reality of my experience; after the first few minutes, I ceased to be aware that the actors came from many countries of

Europe, Asia and Africa; I saw them as fellowmen. In the epic, Vyasa is a character as well, besides being the creator of the poem. In the film, his role as narrator is emphasised and by appearing at critical turns of the episodic stream, he becomes like Thucydides a witness of history in the making, some men regressing to atavism, others trying to redeem history, the history of all mankind. I acknowledge the artistry and legitimacy of this accenting. In 1943, while recording progress on the Critical Edition, Sukthankar said that this poem is our past which has prolonged into the present. "*We are it:* I mean the real *we.*" This is not quite true today as the younger generations do not grow up with the epic as the older did. But the boy to whom Vyasa is narrating the story in one sense, in the film, telling him that it is his past history which can live into the present and help him to mould the future, stands for the young people not only of India but of the whole world, for the epic has a message for them.

But did that message get somewhat warped in the film?

Here the reference in the press releases to the triptych-layout of the film and the comparison with the Genesis, *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* seemed to me to be an unhappy augury. Recalling the Greek epics suggests conditioning by them. This may blur the understanding of the profound relation between character and destiny analysed and revealed by the epic.

And the fact that the role of the abdication of responsibility, of a moral lapse, in the fall of man is not spelt out with unambiguous clarity in the Genesis may point to another possible pitfall. The epic's stand on this fundamental issue is very clear. The self alone is the betrayer or redeemer of the self, says Krishna. Character is destiny because actions jell as objective features in man's history which is continually in the making and these have retroflexive effects upon the agents of action. Today it is ecological thought that has shown up the pointlessness of an enormous amount of discussion through the ages about whether the moral law is world-deep or only man-deep, objective or subjective. There is a right way and there is a wrong way of living on the earth, with the earth, with the world-order. The former conserves it, the latter wrecks it and the wreckers with it. Let us recall the passage where Krishna sums up the grand ecology of the world which is also a benign teleology, Rita, Logos, Tao: the sun vaporising the waters to form clouds which bring rain that makes sprout the grain that sustains men. Bracket any entity or process in nature and it will lose its *raison d'etre*, which can be recovered only when we restore its relation to the grand design which has as its telos the well-being of the whole world, *lokasangraham*. Let us also recall Krishna's Asuric or demoniac type who believe that the world is without a moral foundation, not built on reciprocity, community and communion, sustained only by the self-interest of each. But the Asuric type belongs to abstract typology. Krishna said this too: the demon is within each one, man has to fight the enemy within.

Sorry for the moralising, if it was that. But the point I am trying to make is that we do not have black and white contrasts, only shades of grey. In life and in the epic. Was that forgotten in the presentation of characters in the film? I have space only for analysing the film's handling of two protagonists: Yudhishthira and Karna.

Subtle cues scattered in far-flung places in the vast epic reveal that there was a Duryodhana *within* Yudhishthira too. The campaign through which the Pandavas overran many kingdoms before that conspicuous display of affluence at the suzerainty celebration was as ruthless a pursuit of ambition as Duryodhana's seizure of the Pandava realm and in fact triggered it. This campaign creates many enemies who ally with Duryodhana. On the eve of war Bhishma reports this in an assessment to Duryodhana, Vidura mentions it to Krishna when he comes to the Kaurava court in a last bid for peace. And there is that most extraordinary statement by Vyasa to Yudhishthira that the catastrophic cleansing of history through a terrible holocaust will come about through *him*, besides the lapse of Duryodhana and the prowess of Arjuna and Bhima. If Yudhishthira does not understand this strange prophecy, the Duryodhana within him moves almost immediately to initiate its fulfilment. For he betrayed himself first before he was betrayed in the dice game. Much later, in a debate with Bhima and Draupadi who were protesting in anguish about their predicament in exile and poverty, Yudhishthira reveals, probably unwittingly, that he accepted the challenge of the gamble because he had hopes of winning Duryodhana's realm. In the same debate, he rejects the demand of Draupadi and Bhima for immediate action to recover his lost kingdom by parading his integrity: he had promised to live in exile for thirteen years and will resort to war only if his realm is not restored to him after the period. But pressed hard, he points out that he lacks the resources to fight Duryodhana and the numerous rulers who had joined him because they had been dispossessed by the Pandavas. It is not this Yudhishthira, a complex mix of good and bad like all of us, that comes out in the film. He has been sanitised, one could almost see angel-wings beginning to sprout on his shoulders.

And the splendidly full-spread wings on the magnificent shoulders of Karna in his last phase have not been seen at all. As Eisenstein showed in his *Film Sense*, which I regard as a great book on aesthetics, not just cinematography, great poetry condenses multilayered meanings in monumental images which belong to the visual language of film art too and can easily be transposed to that medium. There are many such images in the *Mahabharata* which, I am sorry to note, have been missed by the film. In the present context, the first relevant image is that of the confrontation of Karna and Arjuna in the tourney of the princes. The gods who are their progenitors intervene unseen here. Indra sends storm clouds with thunder and lightning, a rainbow and flocks of white cranes in the sky and silhouettes the figure of his son Arjuna against this splendid backdrop, while darkening the form of Karna with cloud-shadows. But Surya, the sun-god, who is the progenitor of Karna, sends a shaft of light that breaks through the clouds to bathe the figure of Karna in radiance. This is a dramatic silhouetting of the antagonists and their shadows will extend athwart the entire fabric of the vast epic. Now let us try to analyse the meanings in this imagery, so splendidly filmic and yet missed. All wars are fratricidal; that is why Vyasa made Kurukshetra a decimating war between the sons of two brothers, between cousins. Zooming to a close-up to further highlight the meaning, he gives us this confrontation of brothers which makes their mother faint in the royal pavilion at the tourney. Seeking to analyse the suppression of the fine possibilities in men in seriously under-privileged social placings, Vyasa makes Karna, a Kshatriya like Arjuna, a charioteer's son, born equal but made unequal through divisive social prejudice. The dice are loaded against him throughout his life. The film takes serious, and seriously wrong liberties with the text in handling the death of Karna. In its presentation, it is the earth itself, covered with the blood of too many young men, who stalls Karna's chariot wheels and causes his death. Destiny was very cruel to Karna. Indra deprived him of his divine armour by deception. His weapon failed him at the crucial hour because of a curse, his chariot got stuck in the mud because of another curse. He was not trying to destroy the world either, any more than the Pandavas. Actually he sacrificed his life to save the world. And here I have to point out the second great image in the text; Karna warmly embracing Krishna.

The prelude to that is Krishna's last attempt to save the world from war, after his peace mission to the Kauravas failed, by persuading Karna to return to the Pandava fold. The secret of his birth was not unknown to Karna. But his mother had cast him out, it was Duryodhana who gave him a self-identity and there was no question of his deserting him. But in this last phase, Karna realizes the many wrongs done by Duryodhana, the inevitability of the fall of the Kauravas. "Only where there is Dharma, ultimate integrity, will victory be": this utterance which echoes again and again, from many lips, throughout the epic, comes now from him. In the tangled historical context which has now ripened as the ultimate crisis, his refusal to go over to the Pandava fold meant, not the mere surrender of his birthright, but death. But he sees his death as his victory. And in another magnificent leap of perception, he feels that Yudhishthira, in spite of all his faults, is a better man than he for reordering the realm after the holocaust. So he requests Krishna not to disclose his real identity to Yudhishthira, for if the latter comes to know of it, he will hand over the realm to Karna who is elder to him and Karna will in turn give it to Duryodhana. Karna says this is what he will have to do, his sense of obligation being so great. The end result will be that Duryodhana's regime and its structural violence will continue. If the Karmic law stresses the inexorable nature of the objective consequences of past actions, it also affirms the freedom of man to face, even embrace, the logic of the tragic and transmute it as a victorious self-affirmation. His story will be a saga which the world will sing for ages to come. At the moment of parting from Krishna, which was also the moment when he decisively opted for his own death—very much like Bhishma and Drona—Karna embraces him ardently and says: "Shall we survive this war, where heroic Kshatriyas will hew down one another, to see you, alive? If not, we shall meet again in heaven, Krishna, there I shall rejoin you." Was not this embrace, with its incredible richness of meaning and poignancy, worth a few moments of film-time and a small footage of celluloid?

From the treatment of character, let us pass on to that of episodes. Plot is the narrative poet's metaphor for his meaning and in the crucial episode, with accelerated pace and heightened intensity men interact through actions which flow from their character and these actions generate consequences that endure like embers for years to flare up as nemesis or fulfilment for the agents of action, and as catharsis for those who aesthetically experience the narration. The dice contest is one of the greatest of such episodes in world literature. There were many hidden stakes that were gambled away on that occasion, Pascalian stakes that were nothing less than the self-betrayal or fulfilment of man. I must confess to the feeling that the film missed its deeper resonances.

To the Kaurava assembly and specifically to Bhishma the patriarch, Draupadi addresses this query: how can the Kauravas consider her a slave when she was gambled away by Yudhishthira who had already gambled himself away into slavery and as a slave possessed nothing, had no right to stake another person? The film presents Bhishma as bewildered by the query. But in the epic what he actually says is this; "Very subtle and complex are the ways of moral living. He who has become enslaved cannot stake the freedom of another. From that perspective, Yudhishthira pledging you is invalid. But the wife belongs to the husband and from that point of view, when Yudhishthira enslaved himself, you too became a slave. I am helpless here to give a ruling in consonance with the law."

There are subtle cues in the narration of the episode to show that Bhishma was helpless not because he did not know the moral law but because he saw the utter and tragic futility of giving a ruling based on it, based on a higher conception of humanity and justice, if it was ahead of civil law and if the community was not ready to endorse it with courage and commitment. (Sophocles is untroubled by the matricide committed by Orestes because the old law said that shed blood must be avenged by blood to be shed. Euripides feels that this is the law of devils, not gods. Aeschylus resolves the issue by a higher conception of godliness.) As Del Vecchio has pointed out, we regard justice as consisting in conformity with law and also feel that law must conform to justice. And it is not enough if one man makes the appeal, in the name of justice and humanity, to a higher ideal criterion than current law; the appeal should resonate in the hearts of all in the social group. The problem has prolonged in history. Perhaps Lincoln was very much ahead of his people when he abolished slavery. Lydia Child has said that because the nation has not demonstrated much "heart or conscience" on the subject of the freedom for the ex-slaves, everything has gone wrong, and Rosenberg makes the disenchanted observation that the civil war won for the Negro the privilege of moving from the plantation to the ghetto.

Bhishma noted that the assembly, consisting mostly of the vassals of Duryodhana, sorrily lacked the courage to support him if he gave a ruling from a higher level than the civil law of the time. The narrative needs to be studied very carefully here. The camera is always panning over the visages of the assembly. It notes the quite spontaneous consternation when Yudhishthira takes the appalling step of pledging his wife. But it does not have the courage to opt decisively for the law of humanity, hopes that the purely legal argument, through which the compassionate Vikarna who too feels the futility of invoking a higher law tries to help Draupadi, will win out, but sinks back into shame-faced silence due to fear of Duryodhana.

So devious is human nature that we all are ready quite sincerely to invoke the higher law—when it is to our advantage. Yudhishthira who went to the alienating extreme of not only staking his wife but advertising her charms (woman is man's sexual object and property), seeks to arouse the compassion of the assembly to get out of the predicament. He secretly sends a message to Draupadi. Being in a state of ritual pollution, she would be wearing only a single garment, torso unclad, hair unbraided. She should come to the assembly exactly as she is, "with the waist-knot of the single garment low"; when the assembly sees her in this plight, they will turn against Duryodhana. Draupadi ignores this contemptible suggestion. She does not come to the assembly, she is dragged there by Dussasana. Bhishma is not bewildered at all. If the assembly does not have the courage to rise above the unenlightened civil law, Yudhishthira too had hugged it in feeling no qualms about his absolute right over his property, in staking Draupadi. Therefore Vyasa repeatedly declares that it is Yudhishthira who must answer Draupadi's query.

Bhishma is very clear-sighted though he looks far into the future where the minds of the men of the assembly cannot accompany him. "Difficult to discern are the ultimate ways of moral living. Here it seems that what the strong do passes as right and what the weak do passes as wrong. I cannot agree with this...One thing I can say. Without long delay, this household will end in total ruin. All these Kauravas are blind in their greed." Very important to note here is the imagery through which Vyasa who created Bhishma tracks the maturation of his prophecy which represents his own understanding of the Karmic law. Let us first visualise clearly in our imagination the tracking shot of dizzily tilting frames showing Draupadi, dragged by her hair, swaying, stumbling, holding up with her hands the single garment whose waist-knot had loosened in the struggle. The image endures, returns through the years. Dhritarashtra who had exulted in his son's gains in the gambling and had not stopped the humiliation of Draupadi, is later tormented by the fear of Pandava vengeance for so unforgivable a humiliation. The image of the helpless Draupadi persists inexorably in his memory, but in strange transformation. "I see the scene right before me now: long-armed Satyaki (Pandava general) dragging and molesting the entire Kaurava army as if it were a weak, helpless woman." The image recurs once again, when the war is lost and all the Kauravas lie dead in the field with the eager vultures hovering in the air above the blood-sodden sands of Kurukshetra. The widowed princesses of Dhritarashtra's household flee to the field "with hair dishevelled and ornaments abandoned, clad only in single garments". The recurring imagery not only epitomises the story; it follows the Karmic maturation of crime as guilty fear and final retribution. My feeling that the film has not handled this great episode and its incandescence of both feeling and thought with the sensitiveness it requires and above all has missed the great, truly filmic images it requires and above all has missed the great, truly filmic imagery generated by it, will I hope be understandable now.

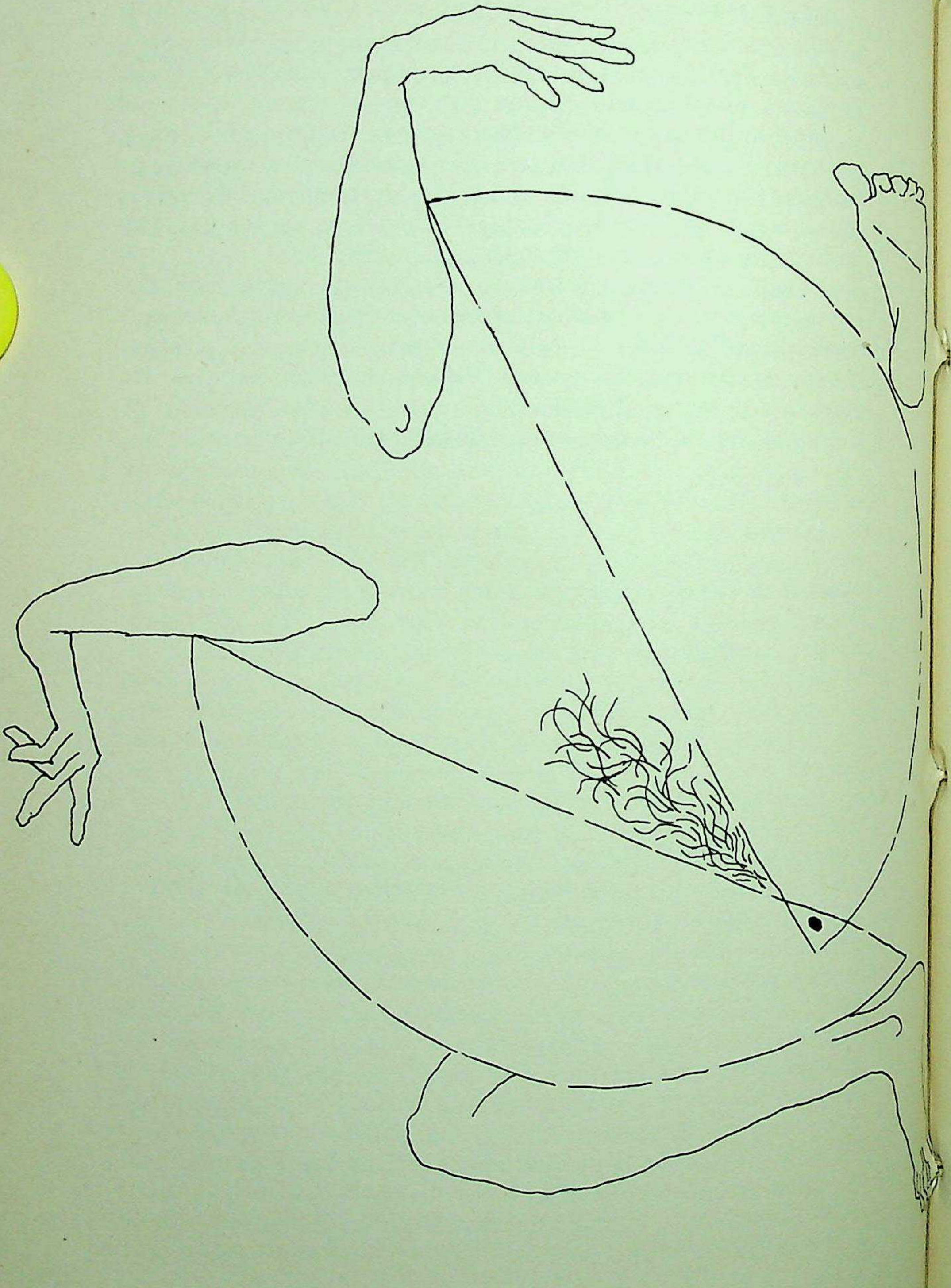
I now come to the great moment of the Gita and its handling in the film. It is an organic part of the poem, for Arjuna's traumatic shock and loss of morale freeze the episodic action which begins to flow again only when he regains his resolution through this dialogue. The Indian psyche has done a lot of damage to itself by detaching the Gita from its poetic embedding and regarding it as a text of schoolman philosophy. And many Western students of the Gita too, like Mascaro for instance, have taken the line of Sankara that the epic and the war should be forgotten when studying the Gita. But while remembering Vyasa's primacy as poet, we must see his ultimacy as philosopher, and as an existential philosopher since his philosophical perceptions arise directly from crucial existential contexts, which was the way Ortega y Gasset advocated to all philosophers. Vyasa's ultimacy as philosopher is seen in the reasons he gives to Arjuna for resuming action; they relate to ontology, the real nature of man, of the world, of the relations between the two.

The Visvarupa sequence is central to the Gita discourse. There are many epics and dramas, in Sanskrit and the modern Indian languages, on the Krishna story and the Kurukshetra war. But they all fought shy of handling the discourse at zero hour in the battlefield. I am grateful to Brook for not choosing the easy way out. But Vyasa had used all the mythopoeic resources of epic poetry in the evocation of the apparitional form of the Visvarupa, image at once of a vast destruction (*pralaya*) and of a great fresh commencement (*prabhava*). The film too has great resources for hallucinogenic, spectral and apparitional effects. Shouldn't they have been used to follow the text? Such effects have in fact been used in the film, rather pointlessly in my opinion, in that sequence which shows Kunti and Madri obtaining progeny from various gods. The tilting of the camera which raises the torso and head of Krishna against the sky does not evoke the numinous awe, to use Rudolf Otto's phrase, of the apparition that filled earth and sky. But I am not angling for the titillation of goose-flesh. Vyasa's poetic strategy needed apparitional effects and since the whole of the Gita text could not in any case have been handled by the film, the spectral form could have been used for its quintessential messages, transposed as images which could come and go in cuts, overlaps and dissolves over that form.

Perhaps I am being a rank amateur, but let me explain. We have film-time only for the quintessential presentation of the highest perceptions of the Gita. Vyasa did not deny the world as Maya, nor talk about compensation in some rarefied transcendental realm and existence, but affirmed the possibility of redeeming and divinising this world, within the horizons of historical existence. It is a kingdom of God on earth that the last verse of the Gita envisages. What blocks it is the withering of compassion and the monstrous growth of selfishness in men. The inexorable logic of this trend will lead to race-extinction in war and there is a very clear anticipation of megakill weaponry in the epic. Let us recall that the lines in the Gita where the apparition says that it is time ripened as nemesis and come to destroy the world flashed through the mind of Robert Oppenheimer when the first atom bomb was test-exploded in the Los Alamos desert. So there could be an overlapping montage on the image of the vast apparition of images of colossal destruction, the sound score using brief excerpts from both the Gita and also from the great utterance of Krishna on the ultimate atavism that is war when his final peace mission failed. It is an anticipatory dirge not only for the men of the eighteen great armies that would perish in Kurukshetra in a matter of weeks but on the cruel toll of all wars of the future too in terms of the lives of men, of the life of the race itself: and in terms of the utter bereavement of women who have to bear the ultimate and abiding burden from the misdeeds of men. Here another image that could have been blended into the montage is that incredible *pietà*, Draupadi lamenting her five sons being comforted by Gandhari all of whose hundred sons were killed by Draupadi's husband, Bhima. "Stop weeping, daughter Draupadi! Look at me, do you see this woman of sorrow bereft of all her hundred sons? ...Who will console me, who share your fate?" And there is yet another great image: the gaunt figure of Vyasa, silhouetted against the field with its fallen myriad, lamenting with upraised arms the folly of men who do not realize that community and communion, Dharma, can ensure the legitimate wealth and other satisfactions which they now seek through competition and rivalry, with fatal consequences. This can lead to another great perception of the Gita: the earth can become an order of well-being for all, if man learns a lesson from the benign teleology of the cosmic order itself where every process and entity work for the whole. The images and words here can be drawn from Krishna's summing up of the grand ecology of the world.

The last and most profound perception is that God and man are partners in this great enterprise and man here should be prepared to confront the tragic, accept martyrdom. This could be tellingly brought home by using images of the text that achieve the transmutation of the tragic. The transition in the text whereby, implored by Arjuna to assume his benign form as Vishnu, still a god and therefore distanced by the gulf that separates creator and creature, Krishna resumes his form as the friend of Arjuna, even his servitor as charioteer. This is a most poetic and moving sequence, but I would also tap a much earlier passage in the text for images that can blend with it, complementing and deepening the message. The immense destruction wrought by the Visvarupa which Arjuna saw in his vision chills his heart and there are passages in the dialogue which show that he was fearing his own death. Karna too has a vision of the Visvarupa and he mentions this in his talk with Krishna. He sees a terrible form stalking the field, he sees the war as an awesome ritual-altar in whose fiery flames all the unrighteous will be destroyed so that there can be the possibility of a better world. Destiny had involved him also in the transgressions of history and he too will perish. But where Arjuna felt fear, Karna experiences horripilation, euphoria. He identified the apparition with Krishna but wants no transformation and embraces him at the final parting. At the end of the inner history of the mind and heart of man, the fratricide is ended, for Karna too becomes a partner of deity in fulfilling God's great design for history. And just as he was born as the elder brother, he emerges as the senior partner, with deeper insight than Arjuna, with no fear, with an euphoric acceptance of the need to sacrifice his life.

Or is all this the unhinged musings of an incredibly naive mind? But I am sure not too many will have such doubts about my final comment: we need musings of this kind (of course by more sober minds) to realize the vibrant contemporaneity of the *Mahabharata* and only original and modern approaches of the kind seen in Brook's film can stimulate them. Let us have many more such splendid attempts.



A Poetic Testament

Craig Raine

Towards the end of 1984, the friendly but formidable Irish critic, Edna Longley, told me in a Belfast pub that the long poem was a chimera. An unsurprising verdict, perhaps, since her husband, Michael Longley, has become our most expert practitioner of the silicone chip lyric—a poetry not merely short, but extraordinarily dense. Sometimes only two lines long, his beautiful Bonzai miniaturised verses transmit their powerful charge and retain a persistent penumbra of feeling—the emotional equivalent of toothache, with its indescribable, merciless pang and its vivid after-image. But it was an unsurprising verdict, too, because this idea—of the long poem as a chimera—is an old prejudice. It goes all the way back to Poe, for whom, as he explains in his essay 'The Poetic Principle', the long poem is a contradiction in terms. Meaning that the essence of poetry is the lyric impulse—and that an impulse is an impulse is an impulse. An impulse, by definition, is not extended—it is the shot of spirits rather than the inexhaustible tea-urn.

Seamus Heaney's poem 'Stone from Delphi' is an eloquent statement of this theory of poetic inspiration:

> *govern the tongue, fear hybris, fear the god*
> *until he speaks in my untrammelled mouth.*

This prescription is at once modest (because the poet is merely the conduit for a larger force) and only saved from immodesty by its metaphorical status. The activity of poetry is elevated to something godlike—but only as a figure of speech. I am reminded of Stravinsky's description of himself as 'the vessel through which *Le Sacre* passed'—a pretence at odds with his copious manuscript changes, or the late alterations Stravinsky made to the instrumentation to meet criticisms of the first conductor, Pierre Monteux. And as a matter of fact, proof copies of Heaney's poem 'Stone from Delphi' record alternative lines a rejected and, presumably, trammelled version.

Inspiration isn't the simple process—the flash of light, the clap of thunder, the voice from the clouds—we might like it to be. But neither can it be summarily dismissed. Thus Eliot may be scathing about the Yeatsian version of inspiration—'something like the exaltation to be obtained, I believe, from hashisch or nitrous oxide'—but he has his own version of it. Which is as follows: 'I know,' writes Eliot, 'that some forms of ill-health, debility or anaemia, may (if other circumstances are favourable) produce an efflux of poetry in a way approaching the condition of automatic writing.' Still, I prefer this version of inspiration—inspiration as a disability, rather than something quasi-divine, 'fear the god/until he speaks in my untrammelled mouth'.

Of course, this latter version of Delphic afflatus isn't innocent. Heaney is no clumping literalist and he requires of his reader a tactful translation. He means that the poet should forgo what Hopkins famously defined as Parnassian, in a letter to Alexander Baillie (10 September 1864): 'Great men, poets I mean,' writes Hopkins, 'have each their own dialect as it were of Parnassian, formed generally as they go on writing, and at last,—this is the point to be marked,—they can see things in this Parnassian way and describe them in this Parnassian tongue, without further effort of inspiration.' In other words, the poet isn't writing to the top of his bent, and beyond, but is only writing *like* himself.

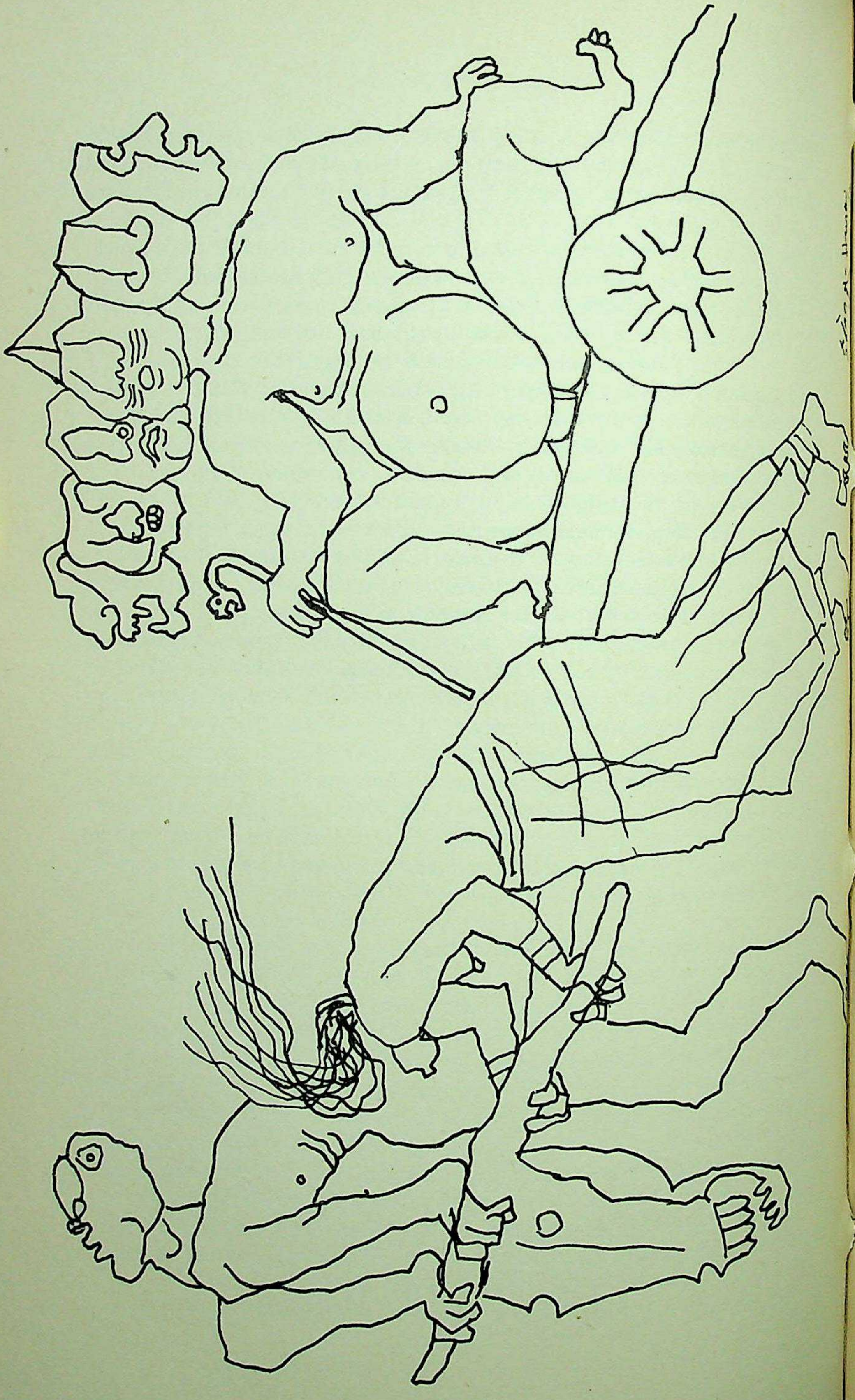
Faced with the quasi-divine analogy, the proper response is ridicule. Valery is wonderfully caustic: 'inspiration is an hypothesis,' he says, 'that reduces the author to the role of observer.' Yet, faced with the craftsman analogy of Hopkins, one of our most original literary critics, how do we plead? I think the writer must plead guilty, but with his head held high. There is nothing to be ashamed of in Parnassian. Valery once more: 'it is essential for an artist to know how to imitate himself. This is the only way of solidly constructing a work of art—an undertaking which is bound to be a war on instability, fluctuations of thought and energy and passing moods.'

I find Valery's pragmatism immensely appealing. Eliot, too, was pragmatic. And despite his personal view of inspiration—in which poetry is a by-product of physical debility—Eliot readily conceded that he could not think 'of Shakespeare or Dante as having been dependent upon such capricious releases'. They were too prolific for that. Such sustained achievement could hardly have been initiated by even the most virulent flu virus. There are two things wrong with Randall Jarrell's formula for great poetry. 'A good poet,' he wrote, 'is someone who manages, in a lifetime of standing out in thunder-storms, to be struck by lightning five or six times; a dozen or two dozen times and he is great.' The first thing wrong with Jarrell's image is the image—getting struck by lightning once doesn't sound like a good idea, let alone a dozen times. Secondly, it places poetry in the context of accident rather than skill—and not just minor accident, but major cataclysm.

There is something horribly helpless and depressingly drenched in Jarrell's evocation. Stravinsky composed, at the piano, every day, and wrote in his autobiography: 'Fingers are not to be despised. They are great inspirers.'

Forget about lightning, in other words. Trust to those local inspirations that happen at the desk during work in progress—little lifts, sudden buoyancies, inbidden vistas. With those, every practising artist is familiar. And they will occur in the course of any long poem.

What the poet does is as ordinary and mysterious as digesting. I question. I break life down. I impose chaos on order. For instance, we think we know how food is ingested, digested, divided into energy and excrement. The neat theory, however, is one thing: control of the process is another; consciousness of the process yet another. Are we aware of protein in the stomach being acted on by pepsin, the appropriate enzyme? Digestion, thinking and breathing are all functions we perform without knowing how we perform them. The body is a dark continent. The mind is another. So I can say very little about what I do. I accept nothing as read. I attack the pretence that we know how things work, whether they happen to be the action of saliva or sexual love from adolescence to old age. This is John Donne on prayer, but prayer as dissipation rather than single-minded devotion: 'a memory of yesterdays pleasures, a feare of tomorrows dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine eare, a light in mine eye, an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a Chimera in my braine, troubles me in my prayer.' This sermon was preached in December 1626 and is still a valid prescription for the art I like—art which pays attention, which remembers, which records, which prefers what is actually true to what is merely ideal, which imposes chaos on order.



DRAWING ON PAPER

A Revision of Indian Theatre

Paul Jacob

> *May God us keep*
> *From single vision and Newton's sleep.*
> *—William Blake*

The follwing is a completely critical look at modern Indian theatre. Much has had to be taken for granted in this attempt, not the least of which is that the authorities know what they were doing when they organized a drama festival of a scope and range never before witnessed. Naturally, no overview of it is possible except at some leisure and length, which no review pages of any journal in this country can really afford. And, insofar as the critical is always directly behind the creative, this kind of total recall is being tried at least a decade after the phenomenon of 'total theatre' hit these shores and made a hasty retreat since there was already a sort of *trompe-l'oeil* of itself here. *Tota Bóla*, significantly, was among the first absorptions of the aftershock when translating the unassuming Kannada *Jokumaraswami* into the national language. Others followed in rapid succession, fairly ubiquitously. But the wave spent itself soon enough, washing up from the depths—the existence of which is surely our concern—much that cannot be part of the inventory. We can only nod in passing at the Indian People's Theatre Association and the political musicals that preceded it as they were officious in their own way. The seminar arranged by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations taking within its ambit both tradition and the media was something like soldiers and students on a rendezvous with Hamlet's father's ghost, so thoroughly disoriented were they, as were the stars Naseeruddin Shah and Amrish Puri in *Andha Yug*. We do nod, nevertheless, at them and at Keshav Kothari, Rajinder Paul, Girish Karnad and Veena Sikri, respectively secretary, vice-chairman, chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi and director-general of ICCR. I have left out of account Adya Rangacharya's *Suno Janmejaya* as produced by B.M. Shah for the festival as it was but a faltering step at a genuinely modern Indian theatre before it learnt to stand squarely on its feet with *Uddhwasta Dharmashala* some twenty years later.

The Nehru Shatabdi Natya Samaroh in Delhi from September 3 to

17, 1989, has brought about a revolution. Ostensibly an attempt to highlight the landmarks in modern Indian playwriting and production, it was itself a landmark in that it achieved this quiet change in the way we look at the theatre of the immediate past and present. Quiet, because so long after the event I am not aware of anyone trying to take stock of the way this drama festival has affected us.

True, there were the usual bustle on the part of the organizers, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, and the scamper for invitations on the part of the public inseparable from such events, though it has never been so manifest in the case of the theatre. Not unless one thinks of Habib Tanvir, the master of imitation theatre in every possible sense of the term, busy imitating Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* with *Agra Bazar* to round off the festival, except that Jonson is inimitable.

The public and the SNA, however, have always been a step ahead of the poor critic. In the fifties their representatives were going from house to house trying to induce the inmates to come to the theatre and watch their efforts. Semi-professional companies like the Hindustani Theatre had to let their premises be used for purposes other than that which they were hired for in the first place, so that you had the spectacle of M.S. Sathyu giving a strenuous introductory oration to the screening of Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* Part I to an audience of some half a dozen.

By the sixties they were literally storming the auditorium, in this case either a ruin or an unfinished one, because there was suddenly an outsider in their midst. The spectacle changed to one of keeping excess audiences out, with polite ushers telling them firmly to try the next day or week. Joy Michael's Yatrik, which introduced regular weekend theatre at a fairground pavilion, was probably a false dawn. The theatre was to all intents and purposes English, whose Hindi counterpart was a poor young relation. Yatrik itself was a progeny of Unity Theatre and a near relative of the British High Commission Amateur Dramatic Club, a continuation indeed of university and diplomatic dramatic. So much so that Walter Gardner Stanbridge of the British High Commission was thought at that time to be the best thing that happened to Indian theatre, at least in Delhi, where Indraprastha Theatre, the Little Theatre Group and Three Arts Club were just also-rans.

But the true outsider, a catalyst that could shake this kind of theatre out of its slumber, was Ebrahim Alkazi who took over as Director of the National School of Drama in 1961, straight from a stint with the English theatre of Bombay. In the decade and a half that he functioned in that capacity he practically discovered Indian theatre singlehandedly. For it was a discovery for all concerned, including the audience, rather than a restoration of dignity to that theatre—one related to the existence of the playwright, alive and kicking in different parts of India rather than dead and classical in various Indo-European languages.

Contrary to popular belief, Alkazi was not a technician of the theatre but an impresario intellectually at home as much with playwrights as with actors. His predilection was for the epic, which was also the import if not the achievement of most of the Indian playwrights he attempted and set his stamp on—Mohan Rakesh, Dharmavir Bharati and Girish Karnad, the first two in their Hindi and the last translated from Kannada into Urdu but all in their ultimate idiom.

The first of them may be surprising as he is considered a romantic, but he was surprising throughout his short career as a dramatist producing three full-length and less than half a dozen one-act plays apart from a couple of unfinished projects. He is on the other hand a political playwright, his first produced play dealing with the politics of poetry and the others with religion and sex successively. And Alkazi presented *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* the only way it can be, in the epic manner, which means you see the play steadily and whole rather than partially at close quarters. One may be sure that neither Shyamanand Jalan nor Satyadev Dubey who produced it just before and after Alkazi did, in Calcutta and Bombay respectively, had any insight into it to judge from their treatment of Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* and of Bharati's *Andha Yug* at the festival. They simply have to be monumental variously in conception and execution. Om Shivpuri, who premiered the former in 1969 was the earliest of Alkazi's students to have imbibed the style. The teacher himself, who mounted the latter play in 1963 and revived it often against various monumental backdrops excluding the NSD's own arena theatre at Rabindra Bhawan, has been the only director to leave any lasting impression of that curiously embryonic epic verse play.

Andha Yug belonged to no tradition; neither did it start any. Insofar as it is the first and only ambitious dramatic work of a poet, perhaps one should look for a model, especially if one is a director, in T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, as Alkazi seems to have done. But the true tradition began contemporaneously, Rakesh giving it a hand along with Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar. Now, Alkazi did not touch Tendulkar, while he did essay Sircar's *Tringsha Shatabdi* with epic grandeur around the time that Shivpuri produced Rakesh's *Lehron Ke Rajhans* in the NSD Repertory's studio theatre. The latter also attempted Tendulkar's *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* in the half-intimate, semi-amphitheatre with a proscenium stage of the Triveni complex, one later used by Sircar himself for his Third Theatre experiments of *Sagina Mahato* and *Abu Hasan*.

One mentions all this because, somewhere along the way, the modern Indian theatrical tradition so laboriously built up by four playwrights disappeared into traditional Indian theatre literally so understood. You cannot really produce Tendulkar intimately any more than you can turn Sircar, a romantic, into an epic *a la* Alkazi's rechristened *Hiroshima* which merely managed to turn him leprous so far as dramatic form is concerned, something like Bertolt Brecht, who is environmental if he is anything as shown by Richard Schechner's *Mother Courage* in the Modern School gym and Amitabh Dasgupta's *The Irresistible Rise of Arturo Ui* in the mini-maidan behind Bahawalpur House, complete with building crane and all. For Sircar like Rakesh is epic only in concept and you have to produce him strictly as he set it down for you, like Hamlet's play within the play. And Tendulkar is a believer in power, epic in execution, turning whose *Shantata!* into a whispering gallery naturally made it a game, dangerous or otherwise *pace* Friedrich Durrenmatt, which the play is not. That is why his *Ghashiram Kotwal* is not about the titular power-monger at all but about the power principle as represented by Nana Phadnavis, but this remains only an idea without any play of ideas.

Obviously it is not the director that one has to save the modern Indian playwright from. Alkazi and Shivpuri have in any case retired from Indian theatre, the former fairly intelligently into the emerging world of Indian painting and the latter into the escapist one of Bombay films. One has to protect him from himself. Like his counterparts elsewhere, he is easily led, the more so when he thinks he is not. At least two of the tribe have written about this trap, Chintamani Khanolkar and Madhu Rye in their *Ek Shoonya Bajirao* and *Kisi Ek Phool Ka Nam Lo*, I daresay with false humility. But it is true! Rakesh gets round it circumspectly, not to say unromantically, as the poet's loss of inspiration when required to write plays for the elite suddenly taken up with the countryside and its crafts, its unspoilt airs and inviolate what not that is the theme of *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*. Of course the theme is not the play but a remarkably prophetic *scherzo* that the playwright utilized to rap his contemporaries on the knuckle pretty hard long before they settled down to writing musical extravaganzas in the folk manner and he himself was dead.

Those contemporaries were all playwrights of the first order, some of the best that modern Indian theatre has seen, but they had no ear for music. When you read Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* to find out why it should be so unaccountably effete on stage, especially in the storied first production by Jabbar Patel represented at the festival, you see that the play itself is as powerfully constructed as ever. But it is no longer in a theatrical language but in a kind of euphues, heavily alliterative prose and end-stopped bagatelle. In Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* you have the unedifying spectacle of a playwright who, to stretch a point, had been exclusively concerned with the spiritual suddenly enamoured of the ritual. All that fuss over minutiae made the whole infrastructure collapse upon itself in B.V. Karanth's flash-point production in Kannada that was commissioned by the Akademi, the minims and the majors coming out like termites quite complainingly.

It is perfectly possible to be evasive about dramatic language, like Sircar talking about *The Changing Language of Theatre* in 1982 as the only communicative one between him and his audience otherwise divided by English or words to that familiar effect. And Rakesh's own *The Dramatic Word*, available only in outline, nonetheless beat about the bush a great deal. He seemed to be dissatisfied with the role of playwright and wanted to be director, actor, critic and even an architect of the theatre rolled into one, whereas he had achieved the feat as far as is possible in his plays. As a result the other constituents of his compendious persons are still discovering him with surprise, *vide* the following exchange between Shyamanand Jalan the actor-director and Dharani Ghosh the critic in *Contemporary Indian Theatre*:

> We took up his *Ashadh* and found that it contained three-page-long pieces of dialogue. But its elegant language and lucid, romantic idea attracted me. I was determined to do it. But my colleagues...thought it was unstageable. I was asked to do the third act first and show it to the committee. This was the part with three-page speaches, but it emerged so powerful that everyone was stunned, including myself.
>
> Right from the first play, apart from its excellent literary qualities which include the music of the language *per se*, you get the feeling that Rakesh had a sense of rhythm, more pronounced than in any other modern Indian playwright, and that this rhythm varies not only from play to play but also from character to character.

But it is not linguistic facility that makes the playwright. The bane of the Rakesh play is indeed its language, so that any example of it can be read like fiction and heard like the simpler forms of music, say the sonata, persuading him doubtless to essay that Nehru Fellowship project which, as I have suggested, was extra-linguistic. It was because of this that Jalan's revival of his *Adhe Adhure* had a fireside, somnolent quality about it. But his talent was essentially dramatic whereby even a short story like 'Admi Aur Deewar' in *Ek-Ek Duniya* has a fundamentally dramatic setting and treatment. I daresay he was attempting a deconstruction, rather than a destruction, of this facility in his last, unfinished play *Pair Tale Ki Zameen*, something like its confirmed practitioners

Kavalam Narayana Panikkar and Ratan Thiyam.

While a play like Rabindranath Tagore's *Raja* may come through with a kind of primitive, raw power in Kavalam's deconstruction of it with the National School of Drama, however sophisticated the original in a currently unfashionable sense, he surely comes a cropper with masters like Bhasa and Aeschylus. This was evident from his productions of *Urubhangam* and *Prometheus Bound* specifically for the festivals at Delhi and Delphi. Bhasa and Aeshylus, however, are already too raw and powerful for any attempt at sophisticating them not to lead in the opposite direction of vulgarization. For ultimately they are masters of the dialogue, the way it works on the stage as well as in the head of the reader. Besides, it is perfectly possible for Kavalam to convert Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* into Koodiyattam, as Rajinder Nath almost did some years ago, with his one-man chorus played by four different actors, because it is inherent in the play's half-baked idea. But you cannot do it with the dialectics of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* or Maxim Gorky's *Lower Depths* without turning them into burlesque. This is precisely what happened with *Urubhangam* and *Prometheus Bound* in Kavalam's hand—Duryodhana coming armed with an alter-ego something like an atavistic confidential secretary just in order to accommodate the ritual dance of the apparition Theyyam and the sympathetic character of Io becoming unrecognisable as Mohini doing the dance of the enchantress.

It is not without reason that a contemporary playwright like Mahesh Elkunchwar should be an apologetic admirer of Tagore's *Raja* and Rakesh's *Lahron Ke Rajhans*, plays in which the dialogue is apparently all-powerful while being quite feeble in reality. Tagore seems to have put all he had into his play by way of what he knew of dramatic imagery and speech. Rakesh wrote the play at least thrice, once in the company of actors rehearsing it. These give them the air of being precious and over-written. But Elkunchwar defends them against what he calls "clever critics" which, considering the level of our criticism, is just. We have no critical tradition to speak of, having begun to get plays to criticise just the other day. While we may have a total view of Rakesh's *oeuvre*, we have none of Tagore's, whose plays are hardly ever seen, or for that matter of Elkunchwar who is produced mostly in Bombay. No wonder critical traditions are best if somewhat bewildered there and in Calcutta, evincing a problem of plenty.

Delhi is neutral ground, culturally far from arid but certainly a wilderness where almost anything can take shallow root. This is why a festival of the kind witnessed in September is neither newfangled nor pristine in its context. The SNA has always had all-India festivals where choice plays of the preceding year were presented in their original languages. The only difference now was that the selections were from the last four and a half decades. This was ambitious, boomeranging on itself rather beneficently insofar as it served to confirm that we have no modern dramatic tradition either. The surprise is that we have nevertheless managed to produce, over the last two decades, major works for the theatre against the hollow backdrop of the previous twenty years represented by Bijon Bhattacharya's *Nabanna* and Utpal Dutt's *Kallol*. These could now be seen to be uniformly vehicles for broad acting and speechifying in which the playwrights and directors were themselves at home as hams. Chandrashekhar Kambar may seem to be a hamlet in that sense, except that his *Jokumaraswami* is a very muted, almost academic version of what his more practised contemporaries effected so easily. For in the latter half we are still saddled with a refurbishing of the older melodrama, the musical chimera born, not of the mating of anything indigenous except nominally, but of the western ballet and opera.

One can have a specious regard for Ratan Thiyam the youngest of the playwrights who is in fact not a playwright but an actor who gives the greatest possible opportunity to actors to perform not ecstatically but statically, with the result that they are very mobile indeed. His *Chakravyuha* is so predictable that it is almost a drill. Its vaunted message of ill-educated youth is lost in all that indiscipline and is probably a reflection of his own training at the NSD where he had the opportunity to learn the spareness and intensity of a folk form like the Yakshagana when he acted superbly in *Bhishma Vijaya* under the direction of K. Shivaram Karanth. But no, since he acted equally superbly in the Kabuki *Ibaragi*, he must put elements of that also in.

Where does the audience come into all this? If they were dazzled by Thiyam, even the highly trained among them mainly from the West, they were in turn dazed and dashed by what does working in semi-institutionalized set-ups in Bombay and Calcutta could do to two such exploratory playwrights as Rakesh and Rye. When the former worked with him on *Lehron Ke Rajhans*, Jalan was still an amateur who had the frankness to admit that he could not get a grip on his next play, producing it as late as 1983 as a mechanical trundler. Rye is a far more robust playwright and he takes his inspiration from where he can (not cribs like Thiyam), whether it be expressionists like Luigi Pirandello or existentialists like Eugene Ionesco. It is about time that we ceased to treat them like drawingroom comedians and produced them more abstractly, even at the risk of departing from Rakesh's own conception of *Adhe Adhure*. And if Rye's *Kumarni Agashi* is not an abstraction of the same sort of sexual politics, I don't know what is, the play being too full of every conceivable intimation of it.

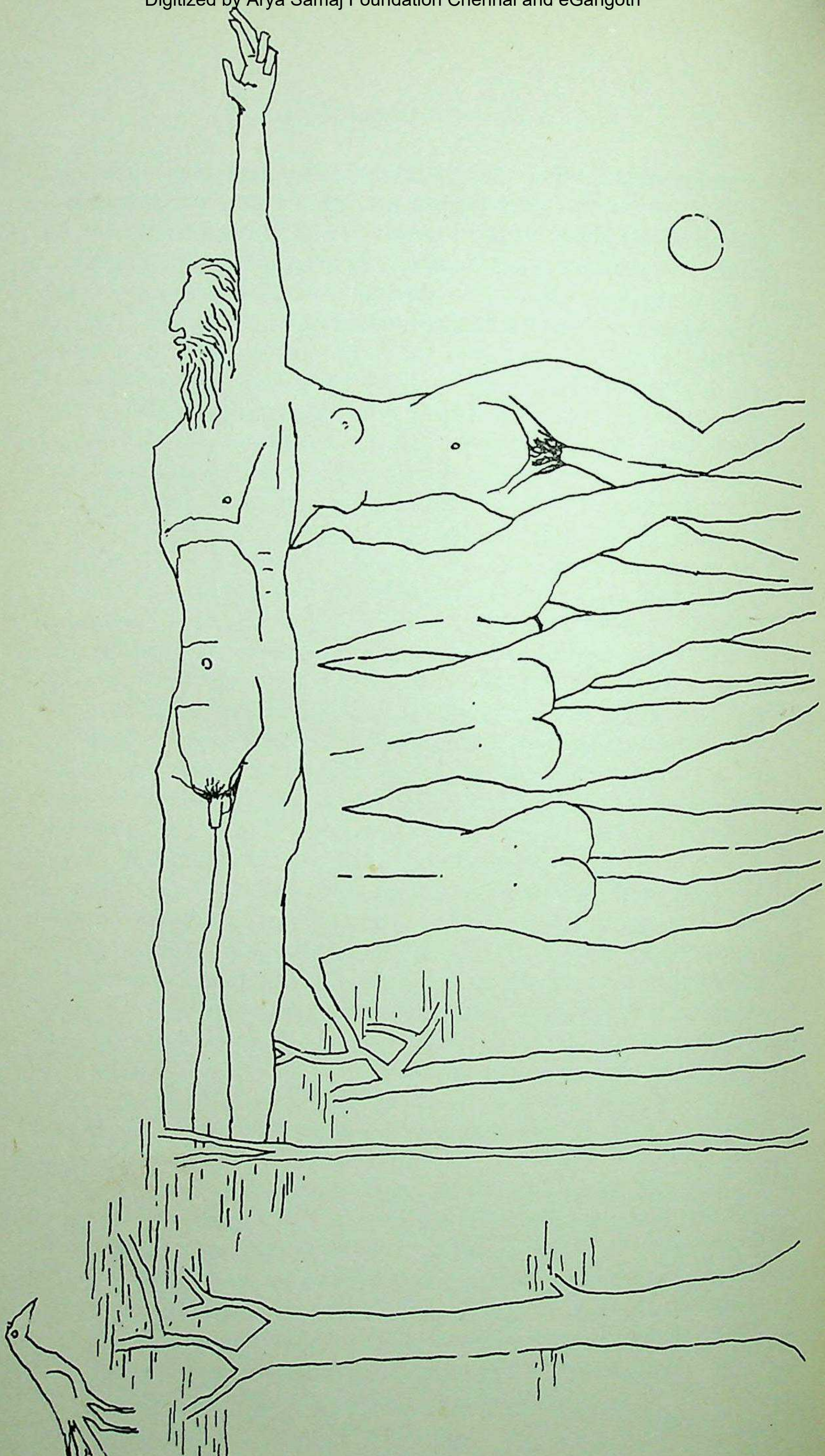
This business of not taking the playwright as critic too seriously was well illustrated by Vijaya Mehta's production of Elkunchwar's *Wada Chirebandi* and, to a lesser extent, Shreeram Lagoo in Govind Deshpande's *Uddhwasta Dharmashala*. Here are two actor-directors of a mould never before seen in Indian theatre, not actor-managers or impresarios in the usual sense, whose careers have been remarkably similar. A deep-seated interest in the subject is what brought them to the theatre. Both have had stints with the professional circuit after long apprenticeship in the amateur one of Bombay that coincided with the emergence of Tendulkar. It is not surprising therefore that they should recognise the plays for what they are, an abstraction or epitome of the epic. What they have in common is a nice sense of the audience.

Now, if you have ever been a member of an audience caught on one side of an auditorium within sight of the wings directly across, you will for ever be wondering what is happening in the other wings. Lagoo solves this problem for you by shifting the action from one half of the stage to the other when there is ostensibly only a shift in time during the socio-political inquisition of an academic played by himself. "We're liberals, forever trying to see the other side of the coin," he tells his very liberal son for good measure. He thus becomes the audience with all the nervous tics and chain reactions that entity is heir to. No classical acting would have done, such as Kulbhushan Kharbanda with all his diverse experience brought to his second attempt at the Raja of Mohit Chattopadhyaya's *Rajrakta*, itself reincarnated from its Hindi version as *Guineapig*, essaying a benevolent dictatorship *a la* Laurence Olivier's own second attempt at *King Lear* in his seventies.

Vijaya Mehta, on the other hand, is the complete spectator, the anti-heroine turned three-quarters away taking only a minimal interest in the goings-on in the astonished homestead, which is the real heroine. Her eldest son has just taken over its management after the death of her husband. The playwright tells me the title comes from a Marathi nursery rhyme talking of the absolute security of an ancestral home. An old wives' tale. She takes her disgruntled spinster daughter into confidence aside:

> I don't want to hurt the children by going away. If you understand that you wouldn't want to leave either. It was different while your father was alive. (*Pause.*) I tell you, Prabha, stop beating your head against it. The days when I managed this household are over. Now it's the turn of your sisters-in-law. So be careful. Don't expect me to intervene because I warn you I won't. ...After all, that's what I'm doing now. ...And how you go on ...clickety-clack ...it's no good ...

But the whole point is that the house itself is fugitive, not a refuge, a point of departure in which the part, so long as it lasts, is always greater than the whole, giving scope to some of the most completely realized characters and episodes one is ever likely to see. Here surely is where we take up the thread lost by our quadrumvirate of modern playwriting, via Deshpande's "battered caravanserai".



Self-Reliance and Technology

Baldev Singh

> Self-dependence is a necessary ideal as long as and to the extent that it is an aid to one's self-respect and spiritual discipline. It becomes a hindrance when it is pushed beyond that limit. On the other hand, inter-dependence when it is not inconsistent with one's self-respect is necessary to bring home to men the lesson of humility and the omnipotence of God. One must strike a golden mean between these two extremes.

This approach to self-dependence or self-reliance was enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi, the foremost leader of the Indian national movement for independence. Over the last fifty years or more, the country has generally pursued this basic approach, and India's policies and efforts at increasing economic and industrial self-reliance should be seen as basic requisites to enable it to pursue its national policies with dignity, without fear or favour (in the area of its external relations, self-reliance finds its reflection in the policy of non-alignment pursued by India). Such an approach is wholly compatible with the increasing interdependence among nations in the world and takes into cognizance the advantages accruing from participation in the international division of labour. That this approach is the accepted national policy even today is indicated in the 'FOREWORD' to the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) by the erstwhile Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, which says, "Self-reliance does not mean autarchy. It means the development of a strong, independent national economy, dealing extensively with the world, but dealing with it on equal terms."

However, it was Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India who laid the practical guidelines of India's course of economic and industrial development on a self-reliant basis. In his address to the annual conference of the All-India Manufacturers' Organisation in April 1956, he said, "If we really wish to industrialize, we must start from the heavy, basic and mother industries. There is no other way. We must start with the production of the machine which makes the machine. So long as you have not got the basic things, you are dependent on others and can never really grow rapidly enough.

Once you have got these basic things, you grow as rapidly as you like. It depends upon your own energy; you are not bound down by any external factor; you start a process of self-growth."

Nehru considered planning by his government through successive Five Year Plans as the effective instrument for optimum development and utilization of human and material resources, rapid industrialization and economic development on a self-sustaining basis.

India's experience in planning with a view to self-reliance extends over a period of thirty-five years through six successive Five Year Plans, the seventh being currently in operation and running through its second year. The stress in the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) was on agriculture and correction of the disruption and maladjustments in the economy caused by the Second World War and the partition of the country into India and Pakistan. Nehru believed that india's growth and development on a self-reliant basis would have to depend on its scientific and technological capability. With this approach in view, the Government of India under his inspiration and with his support made substantial investments in the setting up of a number of institutes of technology for the training of scientific and technical personnel and research and development establishments in various disciplines to provide the infrastructure for the development of science and technology.

The gains from the First Plan provided the basis of the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) in which emphasis was shifted to the setting up of basic and heavy industries with a view to a self-reliant development. During the Second Plan period three steel plants were set up at Durgapur, Bhilai and Rourkela. While in the First Plan investment in industrial development was mostly left to private initiative, in the Second Plan heavy investments were made in a number of public sector industrial projects. Shift to rapid industrialization created difficulties through fall in food production, a foreign exchange crisis due to heavy imports of equipment and machinery, a general deficiency of financial resources and a rise in the cost of the projects. Even so, the Government continued its firm commitment and support to development and promotion of science and technology. In 1958, the Indian Parliament adopted the historic Scientific Policy Resolution affirming the country's faith in Science and Technology as instruments for growth and modernization. A separate Department of Atomic Energy was also established in 1956 to develop nuclear capability in the country and undertake utilization of nuclear energy for power generation, agriculture, industry, medicine and other peaceful purposes.

The Third Plan (1961-66) concretized the aims of India's self-reliant development in specific terms, as to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains and increase agricultural production to meet the requirements of industry and exports; expand basic industries like steel, chemicals, fuel and power and establish machine-building capacity, so that the requirements of further industrialization could be met mainly through the country's own resources over a decade or so. The objective of self-reliance was formulated explicitly for the first time in the Third Plan and in economic terms was defined as:

i) Elimination of special forms of external assistance.
ii) Self-reliance to be achieved over a planned time-frame.
iii) The justification for external assistance during the intervening period must be that it helps to build up the growth potential of the economy to the level of investment from its own production and savings.

Contrary to the expectations, the performance in the Third Plan received serious set-backs. Firstly, serious dislocations in development process were caused by (a) the armed conflict with China in October 1962 and with Pakistan in 1965 and (b) a sharp fall in agricultural production due to widespread and severe drought conditions in 1965-66. Secondly, there was also a fall in industrial production. The country had to resort to heavy imports of foodgrains and other agricultural commodities causing further difficulties in foreign exchange. Instead of progress to self-reliance, there was increase in dependence on foreign aid.

Realizing that any instability due to weakness on the food front and dependence on foreign aid can jeopardize even modest targets of the rate of growth, the Fourth Plan (1969-74) aimed at introducing safeguards against fluctuations in agricultural production and uncertainties of foreign aid. The strategy adopted was to plan for raising of agricultural production and building up buffer-stocks; additional mobilization of internal resources and reducing of dependence on concessional aid through stepping up of exports.

While the objective of reducing net external aid was substantially realized, two major unfavourable developments adversely affected the country's balance of payments. Firstly, a severe and widespread drought in 1972-73 once again necessitated heavy imports of foodgrains at unusually high prices in the international market; and secondly, a steep rise in prices of major import items like petroleum and petroleum-based products, steel, non-ferrous metals and fertilizers together with debt service payments caused a heavy strain on the balance of payments. Such adverse conditions could have meant a reduction in investments, but it was realized that self-reliance cannot mean slowing down of the rate of growth. On the contrary, the rate of growth has to be accelerated while the capability has simultaneously to be developed to sustain it primarily from the country's own resources.

The strategy adopted during the Fifth Plan (1974-79) was, on the one hand, to make a vigorous drive to step up exports not only of the traditional items such as iron ore, leather manufactures and textiles but still greater effort to boost the export of items of higher value such as engineering goods, non-ferrous metals and aluminium, fisheries, chemicals and allied products and processed pearls and precious stones. And on the other hand, a vigorous policy of import substitution was to be carried through domestic production of steel, fertilizers, plant and equipment and maximum substitution of domestically-produced materials like coal and hydro-power in place of imported petroleum. It was expected that while the more sophisticated capital goods embodying improved technology would have to continue to be imported, the growth of engineering industries in the country would obviate the need for import of several categories of plant and equipment. It was realized that while import of fertilizers would have to continue and would even grow during the Fifth Plan, but steps should have to be taken to generate indigenous manufacturing capacity to eliminate imports in the subsequent years.

The Fifth Plan marked a considerable achievement in the direction of self-reliance. Notwithstanding a steep rise in the import prices of petroleum, petroleum products and other commodities, the proportion of net foreign aid in the Fifth Plan was almost the same as it was in the Fourth Plan. A noteworthy feature was development, of capacity for machinery manufacture, so that bulk of the equipment required for industrial and infrastructure development could be produced within the country. Capacity for technological self-reliance was also built up by way of project consultancy, engineering design and project management and implementation, at a level where these services could also be exported. Exports grew at an impressive rate and were successfully diversified. Most importantly, the country grew self-sufficient in foodgrains and had enough buffer-stock during this Plan to tide over the drought conditions in 1979 without resort to imports. The shock due to steep increase in oil prices could also be contained because with the development of indigenous engineering capacity, there was only limited dependence on imports of equipment and supplies. Thus, the oil price-rise was not permitted to adversely affect the investment in critical sectors of the economy.

However, new and adverse factors in the international environment such as rapid increase in prices of imported commodities, petroleum products, fertilizers, machinery and other products as compared to lower prices of India's exports; shortage in availability of critical items; international inflation and growing trends of protectionism in the developed countries, created fresh difficulties in the attainment of self-reliance.

Under such circumstances, the Sixth Plan (1980-85) was launched in difficult conditions of acute inflationary pressures; set-back in critical sectors such as power, coal, steel and railways and steep rise in prices of the petroleum products. Discouraging trends were noticed as having developed in the national economy due to low capacity utilization in several industries, inadequate utilization of irrigation potential and lower yields per acre in agricultural production than could be attained even with available and known technology. With a view to correct the above trends, the Sixth Plan aimed at (a) the stepping up of the rate of growth of the economy by improving the efficiency in use of resources and higher productivity, (b) strengthening inputs of ungraded technology for modernisation and (c) speedy development of indigenous sources of energy, with emphasis on conservation and efficiency in energy usage. The strategy envisaged was of strengthening of the infrastructure for agriculture and industry for accelerated growth in investments, output and exports; a systems approach for dealing with inter-related problems and greater management efficiency; besides intensive monitoring of progress in all sectors.

The Sixth Plan expectations were by and large realized, and the rate of growth was achieved at the anticipated level. A crucial component in the strategy of self-reliance was the accelerated programme of exploration and production of petroleum. Dependence on petroleum and petroleum products went down from 66 to 31 per cent—and this resulted in substantial savings in foreign exchange. *A significant feature of the Sixth Plan was the increasing role played by technological advances and infrastructural facilities in promotion of growth of the various sectors.* In agriculture, there was increase in area under high-yielding varieties, tractorisation and the usage of fertilizers and pesticides. In industry, major advances were achieved by way of production of computer, numerically controlled machine tools, large capacity (3000 tons per day) cement plants, 500 MW thermal power generating units, manufacture of LST chips in electronics; use of powered support faces in coal mining; and a new generation of fuel-efficient motor vehicles. Increasing use was introduced of computers, electronic devices and satellites in railways, telecommunications and meteorology. Even so, a substantial technological gap remained in modernization and productivity improvement in industries like textiles, steel and product developments in capital goods and engineering industries. The Sixth Plan also saw the adoption of a Technology Policy Statement by the Indian Parliament avowing the country's determination to attain scientific and technological capability in various fields and utilization of this capability to attain rapid socio-economic growth on a self-reliant basis.

While fixed investment during the Sixth Plan continued to rise steadily, thanks to the availability of a substantial proportion of machinery and equipment requirements for industrialisation from domestic production, the slow growth of exports emerged as one of the major weaknesses, adversely affecting the balance of payments. While part of the reason was the recession in the economies of the developed countries and their adoption of protectionist measures, the additional reason was the lack of competitiveness of Indian engineering goods due to outdated product design and comparatively higher cost of energy and raw material requirements. Another change during the Sixth Plan was an increasing proportion of non-concessional flows in official borrowings and a substantial growth of direct borrowings and a substantial growth of direct borrowings by the private sector and financial institutions. These, together with borrowings from International Monetary Fund and Non-Resident Indian deposits substantially increased the burden of foreign debt and its servicing.

The Seventh Plan (1985-90) seeks to correct the major weaknesses revealed during the Sixth Plan. One major cause has been the inefficiency in the use of capital resulting in low productivity. The Seventh Plan places special emphasis on obtaining better capital-output ratio from the existing assets. This is to be achieved through improvements in utilization of existing plant capacity, economic size of operation, and efficient project implementation and management. Considering the critical dependence of the Plan on sizeable earnings from export, the Seventh Plan postulates the integration of export policy with all policies and programmes that affect productivity and costs. There is an increasing realization that the scope of further managing international payments through import substitution is now very limited. While efficient import substitution would have to be continued as a policy, the emphasis should shift to a much more vigorous export effort. For improving the capital-output ratio and achievement of the goals in the Seventh Plan, the development and introduction of new and improved technologies will be necessary in several sectors of the economy and conditions will have to be created for optimum utilisation of these new technologies. In the field of agriculture, the Seventh Plan lays greater emphasis on a coordinated approach to irrigation, drainage and land use management to realize the multiple cropping potential of the new agricultural technology. In industry, policy change will be introduced for emphasis on use of modern technology, setting up of economic size of plants and capacity utilization and upgradation of existing technology to reduce the cost, increase productivity and improve quality of the products. To place the country in the forefront of modernization, programmes will be launched in frontier areas of technology such as micro-electronics, information, telematics, biotechnology, oceanography, instrumentation and space technology. As far as possible, emerging technologies will be introduced in the production systems to accelerate the pace of technological progress and productivity.

What is the extent of self-dependence or self-reliance realized over the 39 years since India gained its Independence in terms defined in the Third Five Year Plan? The quantum of net aid utilized by India has been increasing from Rs. 178 crores in the First Plan to Rs. 5889 crores in the Sixth Plan. Besides, commercial borrowings would add considerably to India's debt burden. In 1984-85, the debt service ratio was 13.6 per cent of India's gross export and non-export earnings. However, the domestic savings showed a healthy growth of 21.2 per cent of GDP in 1979-80 and rose to 23.3 per cent in 1984-85. The growth rate of the economy has shown a healthy trend of above 5 per cent during the Fifth and Sixth Plans. Achievement of self-sufficiency in foodgrains, cement and steel; a diversified industrial infrastructure and a strong base of science and technology are substantial milestones in the progress towards self-reliance.

In assessing the extent of self-reliance, other aspects besides purely economic have to be taken into consideration, particularly the contribution of technology in promoting growth and achieving self-sufficiency in some important sectors. In recent times, some economists have made efforts to quantify the contribution of technological progress to growth. The contribution of technology is considered more substantial than that of capital accumulation. With the employment of improved and more efficient technology (either as process/product know-how, engineering design etc. or in the embodied form in machinery, equipment and instrumentation etc.) a given quantum of factor inputs by way of capital and labour can be rendered more productive and contribute to a higher rate of growth. While the methodology of quantification of technological progress and its contribution still needs a good degree of refinement, some available data may be considered indicative of the comparative contribution of technology in various countries. While in USA, Japan and most industrialized European countries the contribution of technology to the growth of Net Domestic Product is many times that of capital, in India it is less than that of capital. It is also estimated that in India the capital-output ratios have been increasing indicating that the growth of Net Domestic Product (NDP) has not been commensurate with investment. The fact that technology has not made its due contribution is borne out by the inability of the engineering goods industry to meet its export targets and tardy rate of growth of exports of the manufactured goods. Considering that adverse balance of payments and the increasing debt burden may jeopardize the progress to self-reliance the stress in the Seventh Plan on upgradation of technology and modernisation is both necessary and timely. India has the necessary technological infrastructure and capability, if effectively harnessed, to make the requisite contribution to the growth process on a self-reliant basis.

In considering the possible contribution that technology in a country may make to its self-reliant growth and development, an assessment has to be made of its technological capability or the extent of its technological self-reliance. The country should have the autonomous decision-making capacity in selecting technology appropriate to its needs and factor endowments even when the technology, wholly or in part, is to be acquired from outside sources. Besides, it should have the innovative technological capacity to generate a package of technology (including engineering goods and equipment etc.) indigenously where it is economically feasible to do so. The country should be able to develop its own technology if not available internationally on reasonable terms or tightly held on political or strategic considerations. The technological strength would depend upon:

1. Training facilities for scientific and technical personnel.
2. Stock of scientific, technical, engineering, management and other trained and qualified personnel.
3. Availability of Research and Development institutes in various disciplines.
4. Resource availability for scientific and technological research.
5. Engineering, design and industrial consultancy services.
6. Appropriate policies and structures for selection and aquisition of foreign technologies and development and promotion of indigenous technology.
7. Development-oriented policies and legislation on Patents and Trade Marks, Trade Names etc. and standardisation.
8. Availability of capital goods by way of machinery and equipment, and instrumentation facilities.
9. Well-developed scientific and technological libraries and information services.
10. Favourable socio-economic and cultural climate conducive to promotion of modern scientific and technological progress and development.

In the following pages, some aspects of India's scientific and technological potential are described briefly:

India was fortunate in that its first Prime Minister after Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, was deeply conscious of the role of science and technology in the country's industrial and socio-economic development. In 1958, the Indian Parliament adopted the Scientific Policy

Resolution moved by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, acknowledging the crucial role of science and technology in India's development, and assuring every support to development of science and technology and an honoured place to the men of science. Under his leadership, the Government of India set about in right earnest to establish the infrastructure for scientific and technological training, research and development. The policy has continued under the successive Prime Ministers and today India possesses one of the strongest scientific and technological capacities among the developing countries. India has 124 universities besides 15 institutes deemed to be universities offering degrees in pure and applied sciences. In the field of technical/engineering education and training, diploma courses are offered in 400 polytechnics (about 65,000 students per year) spread all over the country, apart from 47 polytechnics (about 6000 students per year) exclusively for the girls. There are 160 engineering colleges leading to degree courses open to about 30,000 students. In addition, there are five national institutes, namely, Indian Institutes of Technology at Bombay, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras and New Delhi, with about 1200 students a year. Besides, the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore has about 2000 students per year in postgraduate studies and 1500 at advanced research level.

The stock of scientific and technical personnel which was 0.19 million in 1950 increased to 1.95 million in 1980, a ten times growth over a period of thirty years. It is expected to touch a figure of 2.47 million in 1985. These figures include personnel with degrees and diplomas in engineering, graduates and postgraduates in science and agriculture and degree holders in medicine.

Scientific and Technological Research in India is carried out by R & D institutes and agencies in the Central Sector (financed and managed by the Central Government) or those run by the State Governments and also by industrial companies in the public and private sectors (besides the pure and applied research in the universities). However, the main part of the expenditure is borne by the Central Government. In 1982-83, the national expenditure on R & D and related S & T activities was Rs. 12376 million (0.85% of the GNP) and was expected to touch Rs. 14279 million in 1983-84 showing an annual growth rate of about 13%. Of the national expenditure on R & D, about 87% comes from government sources and the remaining 13% from the private sector. Of the government expenditure, about 90% comes from Central Government sources and the rest 10% from State Governments.

The scientific and technological capacity in India is mostly located in the Major Scientific Agencies and some of these directly concerned with development and growth are briefly described below.

i) *Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)* is the premier agency for sponsoring and conducting agricultural research and education. It has 33 research institutes, five project directorates, 54 all-India coordinated research projects besides being involved in some 21 agricultural universities and four tribal projects in backward areas. With its wide network of institutions and large numbers of scientific and technical manpower, ICAR through its extension services has played a significant role in education of farmers and introduction of new technologies in different sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and agricultural engineering.

ii) *Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)*: Established in 1942, the Council has 42 research institutes and laboratories under its management dealing with diverse disciplines and fields of research covering buildings and roads, food, drugs and pharmaceuticals, biochemistry and biotechnology, medicinal plants, toxicology, chemicals and chemical engineering, electro-chemicals, basic and industrial physics, electronics engineering and electricals, instrumentation, fuels—coal and petroleum, mining and metallurgy, mechanical engineering, marine chemicals, oceanography, glass and ceramics and leather, besides regional research institutions, extension centres and organisations dealing with scientific and technical information, publications, documentation, scientific and technical manpower and institutes for academic studies on science, technology and development. CSIR is intimately connected with development and transfer of indigenous technology and acquisition of foreign technology. It functions in close relationship with various concerned administrative ministries in areas of industrial and economic development and planning.

iii) *Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)* Attainment of self-reliance in the area of national security and defence production is a *sine qua non* to make the country immune to external pressures and avoid dependence on suppliers of military hardware. India has attained self-sufficiency in a wide range of products and the Defence Research and Development Organisation has been increasingly contributing to upgrading and modernisation of weapon systems. The main tasks of DRDO are to design and develop weapon systems and equipment based on operational requirements defined by the Services, evaluate and conduct trials of new weapon systems and equipment, progressive indigenization, rendering of scientific advice to Service Headquarters and provide guidance to civil trade for the development of new equipment. DRDO has 35 research establishments and laboratories besides field units. Technological capability of DRDO embraces major areas such as aeronautics, armaments, electronics, engineering, materials and general stores, naval science and technology, rockets and missiles and vehicles. In 1983-84, R & D expenditure on defence was 2% of the total defence outlay.

iv) *Department of Atomic Energy*: The Department of Atomic Energy was established in 1954, although the Atomic Energy Commission was set up earlier in 1948. The Department has under its charge six research institutes, viz. The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Bombay; Reactor Research Centre, Kalpakkam; Variable Energy Cyclotron, Calcutta; Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay; Tata Memorial Centre, Bombay and Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Calcutta. These institutes carry out sophisticated research on nuclear fuel cycle, mining and processing of uranium ore and other radio-active materials, fabrication of fuel elements for power reactors, reprocessing of spent fuel, heavy water production, technology and engineering studies for atomic power plants, fast breeder reactor technology, isotope production, advanced research in nuclear physics and chemistry, radiation damage studies, high altitude research etc.

The Department also has under its jurisdiction production units for manufacture of fuel elements and atomic minerals and instrumentation. Besides, the Department is responsible for erection and operation of Atomic Power Plants of which four are in operation and two under erection. Recently, the Reactor Research Centre achieved success in its programme of operating the Fast Breeder test reactor to be fuelled indigenously with a fuel based on plutonium and natural uranium mixed carbide. This marks a success in self-reliance in this sophisticated technological field which would also result in saving of foreign exchange for the country.

v) *Space Research*: The Space Commission and the Department of Space were set up in 1972. The Indian space programme is directed to the goal of self-reliant use of space technology for national development, its main thrusts being (a) satellite communications for various national uses (b) satellite remote-sensing for resources survey and management, environmental monitoring and meteorological services and (c) development and operationalisation of indigenous satellites and launch vehicles for providing these space services. During 1984-85, INSAT-1B geostationary satellite was fully operational and provided extensive usage for tele-communications, meteorology, television and radio net-working. INSAT-IC was under fabrication and was to be launched from the space shuttle in 1986. Due to the mishap to the space shuttle programme in the USA, the launch would now be delayed. Second generation indigenous INSAT-II series satellites and indigenous launch vehicles are programmed to be achieved towards the end of 1980s or early 1990s. The Commission and the Department have set up four research centres: Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Trivandrum; SHAR Centre, Sriharikota; ISRO Satellite Centre, Bangalore, and Space Applications

Centre, Ahmedabad.

vi) *Department of Electronics*: The Department of Electronics established in 1970 and the Electronics Commission in 1971 have the overall responsibility in the formulation of policies and applied research programme for the multilevel development of electronics. Its main objective is to make the country keep pace with the latest developments in the field and oversee the growth of professional and consumer electronics, promote development of electronic-related industry, communication equipment, computer software and data processing equipment and instrumentation, and exports. Production of electronic equipment and components was Rs. 12,050 million in 1982; it increased to Rs. 18,900 million in 1984 and Rs. 26,600 million in 1985. The Department is organized into production groups dealing with the development of different sections of electronics industry such as Computer and Control Instrumentation; Informatics; Communications; Consumer Electronics; Components; Testing and Measuring Instruments and Capital Goods. Besides, the Department has three public sector undertakings, namely, Electronics Trade and Technology Development Corporation; Semi-Conductor Complex and the Computer Maintenance Corporation. The Department is also associated with the funding of autonomous societies dealing with Telematics, Electronics Design Technology, Software Technology and Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering and Research.

vii) *Department of Science and Technology (DST)*: In 1971, the Government of India established the Department of Science and Technology (DST) with the overall responsibility in the fields of science and technology in respect of policies, guidelines and implementation. The Department houses the Secretariat of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Prime Minister and has the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958 and the Technology Policy Statement of 1983. The Department is responsible for the financing and implementation of a number of Science and Technology programmes relevant from the point of view of basic research and generation of knowledge, expertize and their societal applications. Its major programmes include functioning of the General Research Scheme, Science and Engineering Research Council, Regional Sophisticated Instrumentation Centres, Research in High Priority Areas and creation of national facilities to enable promotion of scientific research and development through creation of infrastructure facilities and financial support. Of special significance have been DST's Science and Society Schemes for encouragement of young scientists, Science and Technology for women and for weaker sections of the society, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. DST has paid special attention to sector programmes especially in areas like Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Engineering, and Science and Technology Resource Planning and Development. In discharge of its functions, DST has taken measures to coordinate, promote, support and develop capabilities in the different areas of Science and Technology particularly relevant to societal aspects.

viii) *Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR)*: The Department was created in 1985 to enable more concentrated attention to industrial research, development of indigenous technology and innovation to the stage of its industrial utilization, regulate and register in-house R&D units in the public and private industrial sector, keep a follow-up of imports of technology through foreign collaborations and look after scientific and technical manpower development including placement of Indian scientists and technologists wishing to return back to India after completion of studies/training abroad. The Department has the responsibility for the functioning of the National Research Development Corporation of India (NRDC) which has the exclusive rights for setting of items and conditions for transfer of technology from public-funded R&D organizations besides funding pilot plant, prototype and development projects in research institutions and industries. The DSDR also has under its charge the public sector Central Electronics Ltd., a production unit for electronic items emanating from research institutes and the development of photovoltaic cell manufacture.

In-House R&D in the Industrial Sector: The industrial sector comprises both the Public Sector enterprises and companies in the private sector. In 1982-83, 68 units of the Public Sector and 714 belonging to the private sector were registered with the Department of Science and Technology—expenditure on R&D incurred by them amounted to Rs. 12423 lakhs and Rs. 16138 lakhs respectively. Investment by the industrial sector in R&D units in 1982-83 works out to about 23% of the total investment in R&D at the national level. Industrial sector employed 0.39 lakhs personnel which works out to about 19.7% of the total personnel employed in R&D units in the country.

Realizing the importance of in-house R&D by the industrial establishment with a view to absorb the imported technology, improve process efficiency and product quality, the Government has provided substantial concessions to R&D units. Industries are permitted to write off the total expenditure on capital and revenue accounts incurred on R&D from their income-tax. This also applies to expenditure incurred by them on sponsoring research projects in recognized research institutions. R&D units have also been provided with generous allowance of free foreign exchange for imports of equipment and instruments or other requirements for R&D purposes. Technologies developed through in-house R&D by the industrial companies are exempt from licensing provisions of the Industrial Development and Regulation Act, 1951 and even large and foreign-equity companies are given preferential treatment for utilisation of technology developed by them.

Sizeable investments in in-house research by the public sector establishments and private sector companies started being made since the Fifth Plan and have assumed significant proportions over the last ten years. The in-house R&D potential developed by the industry will make a meaningful contribution to improving their competitive ability in the international market, help in exports and become a major factor in attainment of self-reliance.

If there is one area where the Government of India has extended unstinted support since Independence, it is the field of Science and Technology. National expenditure on R&D and related science and technology activities was Rs. 4.68 crores in 1950-51, was Rs. 173.37 crores in 1970-71, rose to Rs. 813.64 crores in 1980-81 and is estimated to be about Rs. 1428 crores in 1983-84. In terms of percentage of the GNP, it was 0.71% of GNP in 1980-81, increased to 0.76% in 1981-82 and was 0.85% in 1982-83. The yearly growth at current prices from 1980-81 is of the order of 23%. At constant prices, the yearly growth is about 13%.

Engineering design consultancy services perform various functions ranging from demand surveys, economic and technical feasibility studies, basic and detailed design engineering of plant and equipment, plant layout, flow of materials, procurement of raw materials, machinery and equipment, laying down of test procedures, manuals on operation of plants, their erection and commissioning, turnkey contracts etc. India has a number of Engineering Design Consultancy Companies both in the public and the private sectors. Some of these specialize in areas like steel, fertilizers, chemical engineering projects, railways, electronics, telecommunications, hydro-electric dam construction, buildings and civil engineering projects, hotel establishment and management etc., while several others offer general services mostly catering to small and medium scale industries. EDCs also serve as medium for transfer of technology from research institutes to industrial production units. Recognizing the availability of indigenous capability, the Government took a policy decision that in all cases of establishment of industrial production units, whether based on indigenous technology or imported know-how, the prime consultants would be Indian consultancy companies. They are permitted to acquire the services of foreign consultants where necessary for specialized services.

Export of engineering design consultancy services independently and also as part of civil construction and industry turnkey projects has been expanding over the years. Earnings from consultancy services which amounted to about Rs. 1 crore in 1970-71 went up to Rs. 55 crores in 1982-83 and increased to Rs. 62 crores in 1983-84. EDC capacity forms a vital component of the technological capability for self-reliance.

The objectives of India's technology policy as embodied in the Technology Policy Statement of January 1983 are the developpment of indigenous technology and efficient absorption and adaptation and further development of imported technology to enhance the indigenous technological capacity.

Import of foreign technology by the Indian companies is permitted by the Government on a selective basis, particularly in areas of national interest and priority, viz. efficiency in import substitution, export promotion and conservation of energy or development of priority sectors of the economy. Periodically, the Government, through the Union Ministry of Industry, publishes lists of items for which import of technology may not be allowed. These are items for which adequate production capacity in relation to demand has already been established or for which indigenous technological capacity exists at an adequate level. Even in areas where indigenous technology exists in the country, import of technology may be permitted if indigenous technology is tightly held, not available on competitive terms or if the existing technology requires updating, or in cases where substantial exports are guaranteed.

Policy on foreign investment is somewhat restrictive and investment is viewed as a vehicle for acquisition of sophisticated technology which may not be available otherwise, particularly for setting up of new industries in priority areas, or for export-oriented ventures. Normally, foreign equity is not permitted above 40 per cent of the capital; but a higher percentage may be allowed in priority industries based on sophisticated technology or if the industry is largely export-oriented. In order to strengthen indigenous design capabilities and to facilitate utilisation of existing fabrication capacity in machinery manufacturing industry, a special facility for import of designs and drawing has been introduced and is available to all scheduled industries for technological inputs up to a limit of Rs. 25 lakhs.

All cases of import of technology, with or without foreign investment, are examined at a technical level by the Directorate General of Technical Development (DGTD), an attached office of the Ministry of Industry. They function as technical advisor to the Ministry. DGTD are assisted by the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) which has representatives of the various scientific and technical departments such as the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the National Research Development Corporation of India (NRDC). Recommendations of the TEC are placed before the Foreign Investment Board (FIB) presided over by the Secretary of the Ministry of Finance. The FIB takes an overall view of the technical, financial and other considerations and makes its recommendations for approval by the Minister.

Generally, foreign collaborations are approved on the basis of lumpsum or royalty payment or a combination of both depending upon the nature of technology to be transferred. Normally, rate of royalty does not exceed 5% for five years after commercial production, and payment of lumpsum is phased in instalments. Use of foreign brand names for internal sales is not allowed and in cases of know-how being patented in India, it is insisted that the Indian company should be free to continue manufacture even after expiry of collaboration agreement, without any further payments.

Usually, it is insisted that the Indian party should be free to sub-license the technology or know-how subject to suitable arrangements with the foreign collaborator and that there should be no restrictions on exports. Foreign technical personnel may be permitted to be employed for limited periods subject to Government permission.

With the rise in the tempo of industrialisation and the need for upgradation of technology and modernisation, the number of foreign collaborators with or without investment has been increasing. The Government has also recently liberalised various rules and regulations, and permitted easier access to foreign technology, import of capital goods, permission to foreign equity companies to expand production and for large Indian companies to invest in areas hitherto reserved for the Public Sector.

Import of technology also takes place in embodied form through import of capital goods by way of machinery, specialized equipment and instrumentation etc.

Apart from export of consultancy services, referred to earlier, India has also exported technology in the form of joint ventures in various developed and developing countries. India is essentially not a capital-exporting country and Indian share of investment in the joint ventures has mostly been in the form of machinery and equipment. Up to the end of 1985, there were 208 joint ventures. Out of these, 156 joint ventures were in operation and 52 were in different stages of implementation. Over 80% of joint ventures are concentrated in 10 countries—Malaysia (25), Singapore and Sri Lanka (16 each), Indonesia and Nigeria (12 each), Thailand (10), USA, UK and UAE (9 each) and Kenya (7). The areas of manufacture cover light engineering, followed by chemicals and textiles—areas where India has developed capability over the years. Other industries covered by joint ventures manufacture items such as palm oil refining and fractionisation, iron and steel products, pulp and paper, glass and glass products, cement, food products, leather and rubber goods etc. Through export of technology in 1984–85, India earned Rs. 38.95 crores by way of dividends, know-how and engineering consultancy services etc. and Rs. 147.91 crores by way of export of capital goods.

India's technology exports do not compare with its technology imports but they do signify a development of India's technological capability in some areas where it is competitive at an international level.

India's efforts and policies in pursuit of Self-Reliance have resulted in substantial gains in some areas. In the area of foodgrains, consequent upon the technological change in agriculture by way of high-yielding varieties of seeds, improved irrigation, higher quantum of agricultural inputs by way of fertilizers and pesticides, India became self-sufficient during the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) and in fact is presently an exporter. In the matter of national security, India is self-sufficient in medium technology items, and production of guns, tanks, tracked vehicles, class of warships and aircraft under licence is well established. In its energy resources, India's efforts at petroleum exploration and refining have resulted in 66% supply from indigenous sources, and there is prospect of its becoming self-sufficient by the nineties. In production of fertilizers, while the demand has been rising steeply since the Fifth Plan, india meets, two-thirds of its requirements from indigenous production. With the completion of the six gas-based fertilizer plants during the Seventh Plan, self-sufficiency should be possible. In the matter of plant and equipment, India meets 80% of the capital goods requirements from domestic supplies. Only limited quantities of high quality and special grades of steel are imported. There has been a substantial diversification of the industrial base over the last three decades with the consequent ability to produce a wide range of industrial products and substantial self-reliance has been achieved in basic and capital goods industries. Indigenous basic and heavy engineering capacities have been established to near self-sufficiency for meeting the requirements of further expansion of various industrial sectors such as mining, irrigation, power, transport, communications etc. from indigenous manufacture.

India's R&D capabilities in diverse fields of Science and Technology are well-established and would make a substantial contribution to the growth process by way of lessening dependence on imports of technology, import substitution and promotion of exports at an internationally competitive level. In sophisticated areas of technology such as nuclear technology for generation of power, India is one of the few countries with total capability for design, fabrication and erection of power stations—imports content now being below 10%. In space technology, India is already using geo-stationary satellites for communication, remote sensing of resources and environmental monitoring and meteorological services. According to the programmes of the Space Department, self-sufficiency in the matter of indigenous satellites and launch facilities should be attained by 1995. India aims at full utilisation of newer developments in the fields of biotechnology, micro-electronics, oceanography, information and computer sciences, telematics and space technology to bring the benefits of Science and Technology to improve the lot of the common man. For achieving this aim, India will aim at maximum self-reliance in cooperation with other nations.

Wall Paintings of North India

Subhashini Aryan

Wall paintings are an important expression of pictorial art in India. This tradition dates from remote antiquity as is evident from innumerable references in our ancient Sanskrit literature, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. The walls of all kinds of buildings—temples, palaces, residential houses of the rich and other mansions—were embellished with a variety of paintings. One wonders at the reasons for such a large-scale embellishment: the basic reason was simply love of decoration which is deeply ingrained in human nature.

This is amply evident from the paintings on the walls of prehistoric and primitive caves at a number of sites in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh such as in the Kaimur ranges, Singhanpur in Raigarh State, the Jogimara caves in Sirguja, the Mirzapur caves, etc. They were probably executed with a view to reduce the monotony of the bare walls or had a magical purpose.

Love of decoration is deeply embedded in the Indian psyche on account of the centuries-old belief that anything devoid of decoration is inauspicious. This was the reason why in traditional societies, each visible part of the human body is covered with some ornament or the other. The same belief necessitated the carving of the outer walls of the Hindu temples with relief sculptures while the inner walls and ceilings were painted with themes derived from Hindu mythology and legends. The wall paintings and the relief sculptures had an educative value also.

This is evident from the world-renowned frescos of Ajanta and Bagh caves which are the earliest evidences of painting in India and which rank among the outstanding specimens of the classical style of the Gupta era. "The aim of the Buddhist artist was to visualize the ideals of his creed, to illustrate by pictorial parables all the beautiful sentiments of the Buddhist religion. These were designed to appeal to the higher feelings of the spectator so that, sustained by their supreme charm the littleness of his own personality vanishes and he becomes exalted and absorbed. The Buddhist frescos no doubt attained this object and by their sheer artistry elevated the individual into the actual realms of the higher beings, thus bringing him to the feet of the Master himself."

It is generally thought by scholars of Indian art that this form of pictorial expression disappeared after the Ajanta and Bagh phases and made its reappearance in the 13th-14th centuries A.D. when the Jain Kalpasutra manuscripts came to be illuminated. The tradition of wall painting is believed to have undergone a period of eclipse for several centuries, i.e. from approximately 6th–7th to the 18th century. But this is not true. That the tradition continued uninterrupted has been proved by the recently discovered wall paintings in the Buddhist monasteries in the Himalayan region such as Tabo in Spiti valley, Alchi in Ladakh, Nako in Kinnaur and others falling in the erstwhile kingdom of western Tibet. These works are executed in the chaste classical style of the post-Gupta period combined with Kashmiri sculptural style and date from the 9th century A.D. The monasteries established in the later periods continued to be decorated with wall paintings but the style underwent considerable changes. The reason for the survival of these mural paintings can be attributed to the geographical seclusion of the Himalayan areas and also to the cold climate.

The reason for the non-availability of wall paintings in the northern plains of India is the heavy demolition of Hindu temples and palaces by foreign invaders who poured into the country in successive waves from the 9th to the 16th century A.D. There is no doubt that the walls of these structures were decorated. In the absence of actual specimens, we have no choice but to rely on the literary references which are abundantly avialable. These references can be gleaned from romances (popularly known as the Avadhi romances) and folk tales dating from the 12th century to the 16th century A.D. These literary works contain descriptions of the thematic content of the wall paintings executed in the bedrooms and galleries of the palaces of the local kings. What is interesting to note is that most of the themes mentioned are the same as those adorning the 18th-19th century temples and palace walls in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and the Punjab. This suggests a thematic continuity in an uninterrupted sequence till the dawn of the present century. The commonest themes we come across are episodes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the story of Nala and Damyanti, the life of Sarasvati the patroness of learning.

These themes were often juxtaposed with secular scenes of dancers, musicians, birds and animals, folk tales, etc. Prominent among these are the eighty-four erotic postures (mithuna) and different types of men and women referred to as nayakas and nayikas in Vatsyayana's Kamasutra. The latter theme was elaborately and lyrically sung by the Hindi poets of the 16th century such as Bihari's Satsai (a composition consisting of 700 couplets) and Keshavadas's Rasikapriya.

Similar information has come down to us from the narratives of

Shams Siraj Afif, a chronicler of Ferozeshah Tughlaq, who writes in his Tarikhe-Feroze-Shahi that the palace walls in his time were decorated with paintings. He observed that in accordance with Hindu custom, the bedrooms were painted with themes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the dominant scenes being the abduction of Sita, the island of Lanka depicting Vibhishana and Ravana, the battle of Rama and Ravana, the Mahabharata war, etc. Alongside were painted secular themes such as the exploits of the black thief, the gambler from Bengal, the adventures of a ghost, etc.

An important manuscript composed by Qutban in the beginning of the 16th century A.D. is Mirgavata that gives us a detailed description of a seven-storeyed palace with bedrooms (chaukhandi) painted with scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Krishna legend, etc. while birds and animals such as the lions, the musk deer, the elephant, swans, peacocks, etc. are depicted in row after row.

These literary references by Muslim writers are by no means fanciful descriptions. They are significant insofar as they inform us about the existence and continuity of painting traditions. It will also be noticed that the depiction of secular themes help dispel the misconception of western scholars of Indian art that such themes were attempted for the first time during the Mughal period. These allusions also refute the view held by eminent scholars of Indian painting that there was an upsurge of painting activity in Rajasthan and the local genius developed only after the establishment of ateliers at the Agra court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar towards the end of the 16th century.

It is equally wrong to assume that the Rajput schools of painting were an outcome of the Bhakti movement. This religious movement started mainly by the followers of the Vishnu cult who are known as Vaishnavas was gathering momentum all over northern India in the 15th-16th century. A number of saint-poets such as Vallabhacharya, Madhavacharya, Surdas, Mirabai, Tulsidas, Kabir and Rahim gave an additional impetus to this movement which popularised the Krishna legend among the masses. Since these saints laid emphasis on the path of love, the theme of Krishna's romantic dalliances with Radha and the Gopis (milkmaids) of Braja gained popularity. In the course of time, the themes became the epitome of Divine love. In the wall paintings depicting this theme, emphasis is laid on the wanton playfulness of lovers in union and separation.

The Vaishnavite subjects, the episodes from the Krishna legend, various classifications of heroes and heroines, pictorial representations of musical modes (Ragamala) and Sanskrit love lyrics which form the themes of Rajasthani wall paintings clearly suggest that the Rajput schools of painting were the true inheritors of indigenous traditions.

The princely States of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Kota, Bundi, Udaipur, etc. were ruled over by chivalrous Rajputs who were great connoisseurs and patrons of art. They maintained ateliers of painters at their courts. These painters were commissioned to paint the walls of temples, palaces, cenotaphs (samadhis) and other buildings. The earliest specimens of wall paintings exist in the Tower of Victory (Vijay-astambha) in the fort of Chittor, each storey being embellished with sacred themes.

The walls of the palaces of Jodhpur, Jaipur, Bundi, Kota, Udaipur and other places are painted in the most attractive manner. The galleries and courtyards are fully covered with mural paintings. In fact, every inch of the wall space is occupied by paintings depicting puranic lore, scenes of court and palace life, elephant and camel fights. Portraits of the rulers and their courtiers, scenes of royal processions, hunting and revelries reflect an atmosphere of luxury and the patrons' love for comfortable living, dancing and music.

An offshoot of Rajput wall paintings are the frescos of Himachal Pradesh, a State which was carved out in 1966 by combining the erstwhile feudal Rajput principalities of Kangra, Chamba, Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur, Guler, etc. Each was ruled over by Rajput kings who, like their counterparts elsewhere, were great lovers of art and had large ateliers of court painters. From the last quarters of the 17th century onwards, the walls of almost all the temples, palaces, and other structures were painted with illustrations of Hindu mythology and legends by a number of painters of unequal calibre. The impulse that animated the execution of these murals was the same as that responsible for the creation of the Ajanta frescos and innumerable sculptures and rock-cut cave temples. They served as a powerful medium for the dissemination of religious ideas. So we have innumerable panels illustrating the Vaishnava, Shaivite and Durga legends. The palace walls very often display a harmonious combination of sacred and secular themes. They are in fact the multi-coloured expression of the rich and variegated creative consciousness of the hill folk as well as of their sensitive reactions of their luxurious environment.

Since the painters of these wall paintings also executed the miniatures, there are striking affinities between their themes, colour schemes, compositions and motifs. At times, we feel that the miniature paintings have been pasted on the walls. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the wall paintings are enlarged miniatures. In some buildings, multiple rows of paintings covered the walls of the rooms with clear horizontal and vertical divisions in the form of a five-inch wide floral border separating each row and each painting. The intersecting lines are decorated with floral motifs. The most outstanding example of this kind of panel division is the mural of Rangmahal palace in Chamba, now on display in the National Museum of New Delhi.

The most popular theme painted in all the regional centres focused on the figure of Krishna. The immense popularity of this Hindu god was mainly due to his romantic escapades and dalliances with Radha and the gopis. The symbolism of the divine love of Radha and Krishna seems to have provided a disguise for the personal predilections of the feudal princes whose life in the secluded kingdoms was enlivened by the sensual ceremonies in which they sought to emulate the example of the god in the arcaded garden-houses of their palaces with the queens playing the role of Radha and the concubines acting as gopis in their imaginary Krishnaleela.

Closely allied to the romantic drama of Radha and Krishna are the themes of the personified musical modes (Ragas and Raginis) and the heroes and heroines mentioned above. These wall paintings depict the sentiments and reactions of lovers in union and separation. Krishna, the eternal lover is constantly engaged in romantic sport with his beloved Radha, the epitome of celestial beauty. Her changing moods and emotions vis-a-vis her lover are portrayed in variegated colours and compositions. The atmosphere of *joie de vivre* prevalent in the royal palaces found ample expression in these scenes. The landscapes reflecting gentle grace and quietude served as an appropriate background for the painters who are evidently inspired by their beautiful natural surroundings.

While Krishna the divine lover was accorded the pride of place in the wall paintings everywhere in the hilly areas, other facets of his life were not overlooked. In fact almost all the episodes of his life starting from his birth in the prison cell, his father Vasudeva carrying him across the Yamuna river to his heroic exploits and victories over his enemies, his role in the Kurukshetra war, etc. have been portrayed on the broad canvasses of the walls with a great deal of competence. The most impressive in this series are the mural paintings of the Brajaraja Swami temple in Nurpur near Kangra. Here the main theme depicted is the death of Kamsa at the hands of Krishna who drags him by his hair. All the episodes, related to this theme are painted not in self-contained panels but in a narrative style, one scene merging into another, one event leading to another. All the scenes are crowded and charged with intense movement and animation. The figures of Krishna and the demons with whom he is shown fighting are larger than those of the spectators standing all around. This is evidently intended to bring them into relief. All the figures are painted in a broad sweep in the classical tradition of Ajanta frescos. The delineation of figures displays remarkable finesse and maturity. Effective use has been made of architectural perspective and the movements of the figures have been rendered in a dramatic manner. The architectural settings relate these murals not only to Pahari miniatures but also to the wall paintings executed in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The palette consists of red ochre for the background and pastel shades of light blue, yellow, orange, pink, grey and white for other details. The colours have a translucent quality. These masterpieces are the creations of an accomplished painter named Golu at the behest of Raja Dayadatta of Nurpur in the 18th century.

The episodes from the Ramayana, the Vishnu legends, tales from the Durga Saptashati, and Devi Mahatmya, etc. find wide expression also. Especially remarkable are the portrayals of Shiva and Parvati sitting together in the sylvan setting of Mount Kailash holding their offspring Ganesh and Karttikeya in their laps. These panels echo perfect domestic bliss which is sung in tilting rhythms in countless folk songs all over the hilly area where Shiva and Parvati are regarded as an ideal couple. Parvati is always portrayed as a coy bride. In an unusual depiction of the theme of Ravana shaking Mount Kailash—a theme attempted in the sculptural panels of Ellora and Elephanta—in one of the panels in the Narmadeshvara temple at Tira Sujanpur near Kangra; we are touched by a very human portrayal of the Almighty Goddess who, in her fright, clings to her husband Shiva.

Durga, the warrior aspect of Parvati, is worshipped all over the hilly area. Her heroic fights with the demons and her tantric aspects form the themes of innumerable mural paintings in the temples and palaces of Kulu, in the Manasa Devi temple at Mani Majra village near Chandigarh and elsewhere. The Dasamahavidyas, the tantric forms of Durga, are painted on the walls of the circumambulatory passage. The background is left bare and unpainted. On top of each scene are painted mantras or invocations to that particular aspect of the Devi in Sanskrit which is in keeping with the traditional practice discernible also in the embroidered rumals and mudwall-paintings in the hilly villages. The clarity of composition, mature workmanship and boldness of treatment are the notable features of these frescos. The figures are always accurately depicted, each distinct from another. Architectural settings, landscape and other motifs are often subordinated to them.

The secular themes painted in the palaces give us a glimpse into the court and palace life, the pastimes of women from royal families. Far more interesting are scenes of everyday life such as acrobats engaged in all kinds of antics, women walking on a rope, wrestlers coming to grips, a peasant woman balancing three pitchers on her head and wending her way home. These works are a valuable record of contemporary life. The delight and feeling with which the common people have been delineated indicate a relatively higher level of creativity.

The last phase of this tradition of wall painting can be studied in the towns of the Punjab, prominent among them being Amritsar where the Kangra painters were made to settle by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early decades of the 19th century. This Sikh ruler had encouraged his courtiers to construct large mansions and temples in Amritsar then on account of the peaceful conditions prevalent all over the Punjab. After his conquest of Kangra, he urged the local Pahari painters who at that time were out of employment after the death of their King Sansar Chand to settle down in the Punjab plains where the Maharaja and his courtiers employed them and gave them additional impetus by commissioning them with the task of embellishing the walls of their newly constructed mansions. This burgeoning activity resulted in large scale embellishment of the exteriors and interiors of the Hindu temples, mansions of the rich, cenotaphs of prominent citizens, the headquarters of various religious sects, etc. with wall paintings. It has been recorded by some chroniclers that about one hundred and fifty years ago, each and every building in the town of Amritsar was gaily painted with what looked like large prints composed in bold lines and vivid colours. These mural paintings when fresh must have lent a touch of splendour to the buildings. One chronicler has compared the town of Amritsar with a richly attired and ornamented bride. Besides scenes from the usual puranic lore, there are large panels on the ceilings and galleries fully covered with profuse floral scrollwork painted with great precision and delicacy.

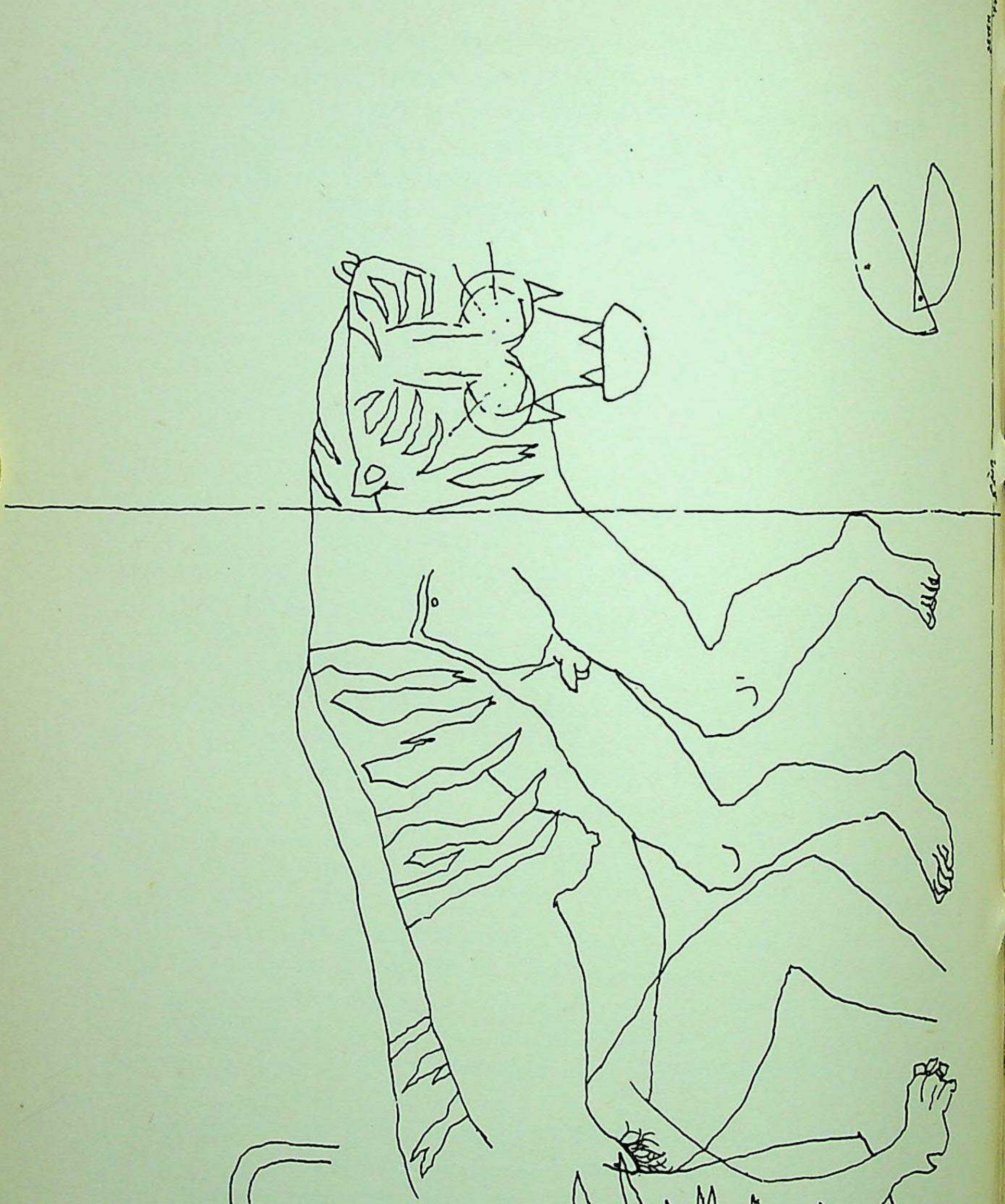
The wall paintings of Amritsar have been executed in three distinct styles—those painted in the early decades of the 19th century are in the Kangra style, those belonging to the mid-19th century are executed in a style which shows a dilution of the Kangra style at the hands of local painters.

The first stylistic phase begins with the arrival on the scene of the Kangra or Pahari painters from the hilly areas. These wall paintings display the same themes and same style as the Pahari murals discussed in the preceding passages. The figures of the Hindu deities are delineated with great force and precision. They are painted against translucent backgrounds and produce an effect of partial depth and relief. The plasticity is enhanced by the skilful application of colours which are ably graded with clear transparent highlights producing the intended effect. Well defined, elegant, erect and supple postures, measured undulation of the body with a slight upward tilt of the head, the fluently drawn outlines, well balanced colours and discreet shading have resulted in an illusion of roundness and warmth of flesh. The best works in this style exist in the Maiyanatha temple in the narrow alleys of the old city area. About four decades ago, some more examples existed in old mansions which have either crumbled down or been obliterated by whitewash.

During the middle phase, the same themes continued to be painted but the style underwent considerable changes. In the panels depicting Radha and Krishna, Shiva and Parvati or Vishnu and Lakshmi, the female figures look more like Punjabi brides. The rhythmic verve, the willowy lines of earlier works have given way to stiffness. Garish colours are used. Germs of decadence seem to have crept into the Kangra style. This happened when the local painters who were basically carpenters and who, until then, had been assisting the Kangra painters or were trained by them, took over. They were not as consummate and skilled as their masters. The paintings on the whole do not give an impression of competence. In the panels painted by them, landscapes are conspicuous by their absence. This change was the outcome of the changed environment. In the plains of the Punjab, there were no hills or verdant dales, no rippling brooks and springs to inspire them.

Besides themes borrowed from Hindu religious scriptures, there were a large number of panels showing court scenes, portraits of royal personages, courtiers, religious heads, wealthy merchants, hunting scenes, birds and animals, etc. When the local painters took over from the Kangra painters, new themes such as the portraits of muslim saints, Laila and Majnu, the renowned Persian lovers, etc., were introduced. Such themes were painted on the outer walls of the public wells, probably by Muslim painters or on account of their popularity among the masses. The story of Laila and Majnu is as famous as that of Romeo and Juliet in the western world and its lyrical versions were commonly sung by wandering minstrels. This comes as a surprise to us because the tales of famous lovers of the Punjab such as Heer and Ranjha, Sohni and Mahival, and Sassi and Punnu, which were far more popular and narrated with religious fervour did not find expression at all on the walls.

Towards the end of the 19th century when the Sikh painters took to painting, the depiction of Sikh gurus became common. These panels mark a complete departure from the earlier ones and are characterized by crowded scenes, architectural settings, photographic realism, spatial relations, an attempt at depth through a three-dimensional perspective, chiaroscuro effects, etc. Some panels display a fairly good level of skilled craftsmanship inspite of the confusion created in the minds of the painters by the western techniques with which they had become familiar through the European prints introduced by the British government. In the course of time, the indigenous painters working in traditional style could not compete with the changing trends and gave up their centuries-old hereditary profession. The Rajasthani style which survived through centuries and influenced the pictorial arts of so many provinces of northern India died a natural death. The last remnants of this style can still be seen in the palace of Patiala, a few Hindu temples in Batala, some secular structures at Pindori near Gurdaspur and a few private houses in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.



The Still One

U.R. Anantha Murthy

PART ONE

They are like cobra and mongoose, Kuppanna Bhatta and Appanna Bhatta. It is an old enmity, its origin lost to memory. Their houses stand on two hillocks half a mile apart. A fence in the valley separates the gardens of the two men. They worship the same deity. Both came years ago with just a copper tumbler in their hand and not a coin, and began working on arecanut gardens. Both have accounts in Gopala Kamti's grocery six miles away.

Kuppanna Bhatta is the older. His fifty years stand out on his face which reminds one of a dried sour-mango. There was a time—not so long ago—when he was known for the sharpness of his speech; it was as if his tongue could split a strip of wood into two. His short, dark frame has been growing more frail each day. But the way he carries himself has not changed. The same shining bald head, small, smouldering eyes, fiery once, now covered over with a layer of ash. A pudgy nose. A curved jaw, deepening the resemblance to a mango. The dhoti wrapped round his waist and the other thrown over his shoulder carry stains of arecanut and banana, unwashable like his debts. He cannot do without a lump of tobacco in one cheek. In earlier days when he had to say something or scold someone, he waited with drawn lips until the adversary stopped, then hastened to a corner of the courtyard to spit out the tobacco, after which he returned to utter something which was like a slap. The other man would have no chance to speak back. This done, he rubbed another little pellet of tobacco with lime in the palm of his hand and, after transferring it into the mouth, lapsed into a long and quivering silence. But now his face is like a door with a lock. If anyone tries to pick up a quarrel with him, he just does not talk back, except that there is a look of disdain on his face.

Appanna Bhatta, on the other hand, has always been sociable and popular. He is soft of speech, his words are like a long strand of hair drawn through newly-skimmed butter. People of Buklapura, the Brahmin settlement two miles away, are all his friends, the more so because Kuppanna Bhatta, through his contentiousness, has antagonised them. Here is a man whom everyone wants. Although he, too, like Kuppanna Bhatta, came to the place without a copper coin to call his own, he now keeps a good house and his garden is a pleasure to see. There are chrysanthemum plants outside his doorstep and his courtyard has a canopy of coconut leaves. A coloured mat is spread and a cup of coffee offered to anyone who goes to see him. A far cry from Kuppanna Bhatta's courtyard with its cowdung and pit-flies and children's shit and leeches too ready to latch themselves on to the soft flesh between the toes. Appanna Bhatta often says: "Even the hut of Koraga the sweeper is better kept than this so-called Brahmin's."

Kuppanna Bhatta's arrears with Gopala Kamti have mounted from year to year. He must be owing more than a thousand rupees. Everyone knows that a messenger from Gopala Kamti goes to Kuppanna Bhatta every few days and demands payment. Appanna Bhatta is very different. At the end of each year he clears his account, not keeping back a rupee. He is equally prompt in paying what is due to the monastery from which both he and Kuppanna Bhatta have leased their arecanut gardens. He does not withhold a single arecanut. Not only that. The Agent of the monastery is treated to a feast, with rice pudding and all, and shown the honours. Kuppanna Bhatta owes the monastery some five thousand rupees. Every year he is short of ten or twelve maunds of arecanut. The monastery has warned him either to pay up or give up. The Agent's worry is not only about the arrears but about the manner in which Kuppanna Bhatta has neglected the areca palms. He has often said that the only way to save the garden and nurse the trees back to health is to make it over to Appanna Bhatta. Before the Swamiji of the monastery went to Banaras, Appanna Bhatta had invited him over to his place. He had made an offering of fifty rupees in silver coins on a silver plate and prostrated himself at the holy feet.

Kuppanna Bhatta's manner irked his own brother-in-law. Little wonder that the Brahmins of Buklapura nodded when Appanna Bhatta said: "I can understand his resenting my very shadow. But what wrong have you people done to him? Could he not have put the sacred thread on his son here and called you to a feast? Did he have to go all the way to Agumbe by bus and spend double the money in the temple there? One should not stretch one's feet beyond the bed. This man obviously has a long bed. I wonder how he has so much money. Otherwise how could he have sustained the big show?"

PART TWO

Why he sits listlessly like this in a corner is a puzzle to Kuppanna Bhatta's wife Gowramma, who is herself confined by asthma to a corner of the living room. Even after the evening birds have shouted their heads off, and the cows have come home and have been milked, and daughter Bhagirathi has lit the lamp in the idol-room, he has to be prodded three or four times to finish his evening prayer. In the old days he never allowed the children to light the kerosene lantern for fear they would break the glass. Now the older son wipes the glass, lights the wick and takes the lantern to the front gallery before he moves.

Gowramma still remembers. Two years ago her brother Subrahmanya had come up to visit them. Few of her people did so. The fact that at least one of her brothers has become a good farmer and had been earning enough to live a decent life is some consolation to her. But why did he, her husband, not think so? Appanna Bhatta, who had, like him, travelled here to find his fortunes, had risen in station and had even got the Swamiji of the monastery over to his house and made an offering of fifty rupees. After the community feast, the monk had sent a boy to fetch Kuppanna Bhatta. Come to think of it, how much could her man take? Could he nonchalantly step into his adversary's house, the doorstep of which he had not crossed for thirty years? Could he of his own choosing receive a dressing down from the monk in front of Appanna Bhatta? With all that, it was a surprise that he took refuge in the kitchen—something he had never done in his life—and had asked Bhagirathi to tell the messenger that he was not at home. Naturally Appanna Bhatta put his own construction on it. People cannot elect their fate. Otherwise need he have been tied down to an invalid like her who was racked by asthma twenty days out of thirty? Across the fence, Appanna Bhatta's garden shows off its bunches of arecanut. But in her—her husband's—garden, half the nuts fall off the trees because of disease. No labourer stays with this man. All go to the other garden. Her husband has antagonised the whole town. Not a creature on two legs has ever stirred in this region but he has quarrelled with it. He is not without his good points. He has never taken advantage of people, does not know what is deceit. But anger? Every grain he eats turns sullen. It is all in his stars. It is their decree that she should suffer.

Her thoughts had strayed. What was it that she wanted to recall? Ah, the visit of her brother Subrahmanya. He did not try to speak patronisingly. He showed every deference. "Bhavayya," he said: "You have no friend around. Appanna Bhatta is sharpening his knife. The monastery people, I hear, have been asking you to hand over the garden. Bhagirathi has come of age. A husband has to be found for her. You approached those Tirthahalli people but Appanna Bhatta came in the way. How long can you have a girl in your house who has shot up like a banana plant? I have no right to advise an elder. But, frankly, this farm does not seem to suit your horoscope. Give it up and come away with me. You know that I have some five hundred areca palms in Halasoor. You take care of as many as you wish to. I shall look after the rest."

However humble and hesitant Subrahmanya was when he said all this, Kuppanna Bhatta flew into a towering rage. "Wait till I am dead. You can then look after your sister and her children. Untl that time, mind your business."

Subrahmanya had meant no offence. He returned with a deep hurt.

That was two years ago. Where had that anger gone? And particularly after Kamti's bill-collector, a Muslim, began his visits, Kuppanna Bhatta's manner had markedly changed.

The unthinkable happened one day. Her husband stood before her and asked: "Will you give me your ornaments, my good woman? I shall get them back to you in six months." This was the first time she had heard such a supplication from that tongue. Its very docility was like a dagger in her heart. All she wanted was that the mark of her married status should be safe. She opened her box, and took out the jewels which had come to her at her own wedding and which she had kept back for Bhagirathi's marriage—ear-drops that her parents had given her, a four-strand necklace, a chain, a gold belt, a brooch. She gave them to him, taking care to see that her eyes remained dry. She made only one prayer to God: that her husband be preserved and that her daughter be married into a good home. But who would look at a girl who had no gold? She had kept the ornaments only for that reason. Her own disease-racked frame had no use for them. She was tormented by the change in her husband's manner. She did not want his pride to be hurt. She hoped against hope that her brother would visit them again. She could confide in him and lighten her sorrow.

Bhagirathi was busy in the kitchen trying to coax some flames from damp firewood. She could not blow enough through the iron pipe or wipe the tears streaming from her eyes. The mother could hear her cough with the smoke in her lungs. In a few minutes she stood in front of her, hair tousled and cheeks sallow, to report that there were no lentils to prepare the family meal. Gowramma advised her to concoct a soup from cucumber seeds.

Why should he resist going to Halasoor? How long could he carry on here? Appanna Bhatta had been pursuing him like the messenger of the God of Death. He had his eye on their garden. He took care to see that his own garden was not flooded. Could he not build a fence to keep out the cattle? Or chase them away or give them a few blows? Must he have sent them to the pound four miles away? How her man had waited for the cattle to come home and how he had trudged all the distance to the pound and had them released after paying the penalty!

Ganapa, who was five and whose belly had swollen from disease, went weeping to his mother. She knew he was hungry. She called out to Bhagirathi to give him some water in which rice had been washed.

No one in the neighbourhood cared whether they were alive or dead. Not once had anybody given Bhagirathi a string of flowers or asked her whether she was well.

She remembered the episode of the jewels and shed the tears she had held back when she gave them to her husband. A fit of coughing followed. Wheezing as though her living depended upon every breath, Gowramma stared at the house around her. She was too weak to move from her corner.

PART THREE

Kuppanna Bhatta had made up his mind that if his wife demurred even a little he would not touch the jewels. But she had not said a word and had opened the box and given him the small bundle in silk. This had overwhelmed Kuppanna Bhatta. Anyway, it was his last chance to rid himself of debts. He pledged them in the bank for two thousand and five hundred rupees. He vowed to redeem the jewels in six months and restore them to his wife.

He sought out the smaller cultivators around, those who had only a hundred or two hundred areca palms, and advanced them twenty-five rupees a maund, with a promise to pay another twenty-five after sale.

Appanna Bhatta, for his part, had never gone beyond forty-seven or forty-eight rupees a maund— and had never paid more than fifteen in advance. So the smaller growers went along with Kuppanna Bhatta, who was able to transport a hundred maunds to Shimoga by lorry. He asked the dealers to keep him posted and he would turn up personally when the market was good.

All this infuriated Appanna Bhatta. His regular clients had been snatched away from him. He told the whole town that here was clear proof that his rival had come into money. He failed to pay rent, but had enough for speculating on the market.

Kuppanna Bhatta made a careful calculation of his liabilities. He scrutinised every bit of noting he had made on the almanac. He owed five thousand rupees to the monastery, a thousand to Gopala Kamti the grocer, and three hundred to the medicine man for his wife's treatment. There was the interest he owed on the sum borrowed from the bank. Then there was the money he needed for Bhagirathi's marriage. The first thing to do was to get the jewels back. He could pledge them again the following year.

Arecanut should sell at sixty this year. That would give him a clear thousand by way of profit. He would pay two hundred rupees to Kamti, fifty to the physician, two hundred and fifty to the Agent. He would get the gold back and use it as his reserve capital. A few more such careful transactions and he would be a free man. He arranged the cowries from his bag and looked for the omens.

A fly flew up from the manure-pit and sat on his nose. Mango-gnats and mosquitoes hovered around the face. Luckily the courtyard was dry as it was summer. Every whiff of breeze brought the smells of the cowshed. The boy with the malarial belly was moving his bowels a few feet away, with a black cur near his feet. A grey dog dozed on the ash-heap.

Kuppanna Bhatta rose, scratching a spot on his foot where a mosquito had bitten him. He went out and brought a twig of tube cactus which he tied to a beam in the roof to attract mango-gnats. Bhagirathi came out with a pitcher of water and asked Ganapa, "Are you through?" The black cur and the grey mongrel rushed to the spot vacated by Ganapa. Their barking disturbed Kuppanna Bhatta's concentration and he shouted "hacha, hacha" at them.

There was a sound of wood being sawed in the corner. It was Gowramma's wheezing. "Give her some medicine," Bhatta told Bhagirathi and began pacing up and down the gallery.

The tiles have to be re-laid. The wall gets damp in the rains. There are a hundred holes on the floor, where the water has dripped from the roof. It is difficult to find a dry spot during the monsoon for the children to sleep. And mildew everywhere—under the mat, in the rice-box, even under the box which contains the family idols. Thank God, mildew does not grow on people's buttocks.

The flies sat on the octopus-like branches of the cactus, its green turning black in no time. there was nothing in the landscape to hold Kuppanna Bhatta's attention. There were paddy fields in front of the house and then the jungle and then a hill far back. A cart-track cut across the jungle from left to right. Someone seemed to walk along it. "Who is it?" shouted Bhatta. "It is me, Manja," said a person who carried a large load of dried branches but who did not seem eager to slacken his pace. "Listen, when will you come to our place to split firewood?" "After I have done with the Seebinakere master," Manja said, moving away.

In his helplessness, Kuppanna Bhatta went to the garden to bring banana leaves. By the time he returned, the three elder boys had come back from school, which was four miles away. Bhagirathi waited for the cattle to be back. The sound of wood being sawn continued from Gowramma's corner. The medicine had no effect. Ganapa munched some pounded rice. He even had a pellet of jaggery to eat it with.

Arecanut that season went up to fifty-one, fifty-two, and, in a month, to fifty-five. Kuppanna Bhatta waited for it to touch sixty.

"Your money has gone down the drain," Appanna Bhatta mocked those who had sold their stock to his adversary. They demanded payment. It was a problem for Kuppanna Bhatta to hold off the ten or twelve who went to his place every day. He pleaded with them to give him just a month more. They would not. So he was compelled to go to Shimoga one day and raise a loan of two thousand five hundred rupees at fifteen per cent on his stock. He paid his suppliers ten rupees on each maund and sought a further month's time to pay the remaining fifteen.

Appanna Bhatta lost no time to make Gopala Kamti and the Agent of the monastery wise to Kuppanna Bhatta's transactions: he must be flush with money and this was the time to demand their dues.

The Muslim bill-collector of Kamti turned up one day at Kuppanna Bhatta's house and established himself outside the doorstep. No amount of pleading or prayer seemed to move a hair of his moustache. He shouted at the top of his voice for all to hear that he would not stir until he had been paid at least five hundred.

If Kuppanna Bhatta was the weeping type he would have wept. As the bill-collector's voice rose, Gowramma's breathing became harder. Bhatta seemed incapable of the slightest movement, like a man in a nightmare. Whenever someone passed by in the distance, the bill-collector started all over again.

Bhatta went at last to his box and brought out four notes of one hundred. The bill-collector mounted his bicycle, still muttering. On the way back he reported to Appanna Bhatta and was treated to a mug of coffee.

Hardly had the Muslim left, the physician's compounder presented himself. His peace was purchased with a hundred rupees. There was still a thousand. The loan had to be repaid now from out of the profit. Not too cheerful a prospect, but all was not lost yet.

But early next morning the Agent of the monastery turned up. Kuppanna Bhatta laid out a plank for him and asked him if he would have some coffee. "I have come to you myself even though there is a swelling on my leg. Anybody else would have treated you roughly. You do not go to the monastery on your own. Even when the Swamiji sent for you from Appanna Bhatta's house, you malingered. It is no use antagonising God," the Agent went on. He had known that Gopala Kamti had received payment. Kuppanna Bhatta's entreaties were in vain.

"I am bringing a warrant of search and attachment tomorrow," he said, preparing to leave.

Kuppanna Bhatta resigned himself to the inevitable. He counted out eight hundred rupees to the Agent, who warned him that the rest should be paid in full at the next date or else the garden would be taken away. And he hurried off to Appanna Bhatta's for his afternoon meal.

Next day some of those who had sold arecanut to Kuppanna Bhatta besieged him demanding payment of at least five more rupees. Monsoon was approaching and they had to buy things for their homes. The whole world seemed to know of Kuppanna Bhatta's wealth.

The price did not rise beyond fifty-five. In fact it tumbled to fifty. In dismay Kuppanna Bhatta hastened to Shimoga by bus and sold off the stock. He paid back the short-term loan to the last rupee, including interest. He also paid his suppliers in full. Only the jewels remained in the bank.

Just before the rains set in, Subrahmanya turned up in his bullock-cart and implored Kuppanna Bhatta on bended knees to go with him. He pointed out that Gowramma's health had deteriorated and Ganapa was growing thinner. He vowed to find a bridegroom for Bhagirathi. Turning to Gowramma he said that by going with him he would be doing them a favour because his wife was expecting and needed a woman's help at confinement. Then, when Kuppanna Bhatta was not near, he told her she had been a fool to part with the ornaments. Her husband thought of his own pride. Wife, children, family were nothing to him. Others who had taken to arecanut-farming had made good. Why could he not do so?

Gowramma replied: "How can I leave him when he is in such bad shape?"

"I am not asking you to leave him but only to be with us for a few weeks."

Kuppanna Bhatta gave no indication of his own wishes. She was free to decide, but he was staying put. That was unalterable. Gowramma was torn between the pull of the home of her birth and anxiety for her husband. But Bhagirathi's marriage had to be thought of. And without the gold to give as dowry, finding her a husband had become more difficult. Her brother's words prevailed.

Kuppanna Bhatta spent the whole of the monsoon alone in his house, cooking his own gruel. Without the wife and her wheezing, the house seemed to be swallowed-up by silence. As the rain poured down, Kuppanna Bhatta spent many nights with his eyes wide open, and he came to a decision; he would get the gold back from the bank. He did not want to be obliged to anyone.

Where he expected a hundred maunds of nuts from his own garden, the yield this year was only fifty. The Monk was away at Banaras and Kuppanna Bhatta wrote a letter of great humility seeking lenience just this once. He undertook to hand back the garden next year.

There was no reply. If he waited any longer, Kamti's bill-collector and the Agent of the monastery would descend on him and carry away the crop. The ornaments in the bank would remain unredeemed.

The arecanut had to be moved to the market before the debtors laid hands on it. If he allowed the ornaments to remain in the bank, the interest would mount and he would not see them again in his life.

He went to the town to inquire whether there was any lorry bound for Shimoga. He struck a deal, little realising that the lorry belonged to a relation of Gopala Kamti.

The very next day, Kamti's bill-collector presented himself outside Kuppanna Bhatta's house. His heart sank. Whatever he tried to say was drowned in the bill-collector's ranting. The man insisted that Kamti had ordered him to come back with not a coin less than six hundred rupees, with fifty rupees more by way of interest.

The argument was conducted at such a pitch that one of Appanna Bhatta's servants heard it and carried the news to his master. Appanna Bhatta yoked his bullocks to his cart and promptly proceeded to the monastery.

By the afternoon, Kamti's man, who had gone back to report to his master, had returned with some gunny-bags and scales. "You sell us fifteen maunds at the rate of forty-five and we would ourselves then owe you twenty-five rupees," he said and took out the money from his pocket.

The going rate in Shimoga was fifty. More than that, Kamti bought at one weight and sold at another. Kuppanna Bhatta did not yield.

The bill-collector made bold to step into the house. To Kuppanna Bhatta a Muslim crossing the threshold was the limit. He sprang towards the room in which the arecanut had been stored and shouted: "You will see me dead before you touch this door."

The man was taken aback at the outburst, and sat down with the scales in front of him. Wiping his face with a napkin he remarked: "What is to be done when grown men behave like children?"

Kuppanna Bhatta made no reply. He shook from the emotion. His lips trembled. But he continued to sit outside the door resting a spread hand across it. The bill-collector stared at him.

Only a few moments had passed when there was the sound of bullocks' bells. Kuppanna Bhatta recognised them as the monastery's. His eyes went blank but he told himself that he must be steady. The Agent of the monastery walked straight in, accompanied by the village ledger-keeper, the monastery's storekeeper, and a servant with another set of weighing scales. Fanning himself with his upper cloth, the Agent asked in a gruff voice, "What is going on here?"

Kamti's bill-collector explained, at which the Agent said: "He is our tenant. God's dues will be paid first, the annual rent as well as arrears. Your master's claim can only come later."

But the bill-collector was not to be so easily cowed. He said

Kuppanna Bhatta had promised that Kamti's debt was the first to be cleared—which was not true. He also described how he had foiled Kuppanna Bhatta's plan to move the produce secretly to Shimoga—which was true.

"Ah, this is what you are up to, Kuppanna Bhatta? You think you can swallow and digest what belongs to the monastery?"

Kuppanna Bhatta's only answer to the Agent's rebuke was a docility he had never before felt in life. He told him about the petition he had addressed to the monk at Banaras. He held his sacred thread in his thumb and forefinger and vowed that if he was given reprieve this time, he would clear the dues the following year.

"Clear the dues, you will! With what tongue do you say it? You have money to buy and sell on the market. But you have no money to pay up what you owe to God. You had the arrogance to defy the Swamiji when he sent for you. You are eating his food, God's food, and don't bother to take care of the garden. What a shameless Brahmin! Look at the way you have kept this place. Anyone would think it belonged to an outcaste. Anyway the Swamiji has given his decision on your prayer."

The Agent took out a piece of paper from his pocket and read it out. It said that the garden should be taken away from Kuppanna Bhatta and entrusted to Appanna Bhatta for cultivation.

The village ledger-keeper put on his reading glasses and added up Kuppanna Bhatta's dues—unpaid rent, loan and interest—and pronounced: "Six thousand." The Agent told the storekeeper: "Weigh the arecanut kept in the room."

The storekeeper, who had newly joined the monastery, was a dark and hefty man. He moved over impatiently to where Kuppanna Bhatta sat and shouted, "Move, move."

"But fifteen maunds of it should go to Kamti," the bill-collector persisted.

The Agent told him to clear out or else he would rue the day. The bill-collector climbed his bicycle and left unceremoniously, wondering what excuse to invent when Kamti berated him.

"Move, will you?" the storekeeper again shouted at Bhatta, who continued to stand against the door of the room. "You wil touch the produce over my dead body," he said in a clear, stern voice.

It was the turn of the Agent and the storekeeper to be surprised.

"What did you say?" the Agent asked.

"That you will see me dead before you get to the arecanuts," Kuppanna Bhatta said, as if his entire life had become a tongue of fire.

"You are a Brahmin and you have descended to this!" the Agent said. The village ledger-keeper put in his bit of advice. He was unmoved.

"Well, you will see what you are in for," the Agent said, as he made ready to leave with his entourage. On the way he went to Appanna Bhatta's house and instructed him to keep an eye on Kuppanna Bhatta lest he should move the arecanut at night.

Kuppanna Bhatta sat for a long time where he was, until his legs went dead under him. Late in the afternoon he got up and stretched his limbs to make the blood flow in them again. He drew the latch across his front-door, bathed, and boiled a bowl of gruel for himself. When the cows came back a couple of hours later, he tied them up in the shed and gave them bran-water and milked them. He lit the lantern and sat down in the courtyard. The thought of cooking another meal was too tiresome. So he warmed some milk and drank it and returned to the courtyard. Sleep eluded him. After a long time he opened the door and walked out into the clearing in front of the house and read the sky to calculate the hour. The morning star shone brightly. He went back into the house, bolting the door behind him. His eyelids drooped under the strain.

It was only when the young cowherd called his name that he woke up. After the cows were led away, he drew water from the well and poured it over his head. He kept a vessel to boil on the oven.

There was a knock on the door.

"The bailiff here, open the door."

Kuppanna Bhatta made no reply. He went back to the room where the arecanuts had been stored and sat down.

There was a sound of a bicycle bell. Then Kamti spoke: "Open the door, please. I shall pay you at the rate of forty-seven. You can clear my account."

Kuppanna Bhatta did not move. The bill-collector demanded: "Do you refuse to open the door?"

There was an altercation between Kamti and the bailiff. The bailiff hurried away to bring the Agent of the monastery.

Kamti spoke again: "Bhatta-re, I shall give you fifty."

When there was no answer even to this, he let go a volley of foul words. He said he would never have let him set foot in his shop if he had known he had to deal with such a shameless man.

Then he ordered his bill-collector in a loud voice, so as to be heard by Kuppanna Bhatta: "Budan, go to the house of this man's brother-in-law in Halasoor and do not stir until you have collected the dues. That man cannot be so shameless."

The Agent arrived. He and Kamti had a blazing quarrel. They shouted at each other as crows do which gather to eat funeral rice.

The Agent used the utimate weapon. He asked the town-crier to announce that Kuppanna Bhatta's movable properties were for sale.

The noise of the town-crier's drum drowned Kamti's protests. He threatened to go to court and the Agent told him to please himself.

The town-crier moved away towards Buklapura. Silence descended once again on Kuppanna Bhatta's house. The noon-day heat became unbearable.

The Agent told the bailiff:" Whatever needs to be done is now your look-out. The storekeeper will help you. If Kuppanna Bhatta is up to any new tricks, you may call me. I shall be at Appanna Bhatta's place."

"We are asking you for the last time. Will you open the door, or do you want us to break it?" the storekeeper called out.

When there was no answer, he rammed the door with a crowbar. The bolt gave way.

"Open the door at least now."

Again there was no response. The storekeeper had another go and the door flew open.

Kuppanna Bhatta sat there with his eyes closed. The storekeeper picked him up as if he were a weightless bag of sticks and put him down outside the house in the sun. He piled up the arecanut bags in a corner of the courtyard.

The storekeeper was in high spirits. "Are the vessels and other things also to be auctioned?"

The bailiff pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket and said, "Yes, the order says everything movable and immovable."

The storekeeper darted into the kitchen. He brought the milk vessel out into the courtyard and poured out the milk. Then, one by one, he brought out a copper cauldron, a set of rice vessels, frying pans, a set of bronze platters, a silver jug, a tumbler (the same that Kuppanna Bhatta had brought with him from the coastal plains), a conch and a brass plate that were sounded at worship, a cluster of basins used for storing water at feasts, a cradle, a collection of ladles, a torn mat and a patchy blanket, a wooden bench, a dozen sitting-planks, a framed silver picture of Krishna, a fibre dhoti—and so on, everything including a pair of broomsticks, barring only the holy box that contained the family idol. Kuppanna Bhatta's earthly possessions were spread out in the courtyard. He himself sat on his haunches amidst the ruin, with his head resting against his hand, eyes lowered.

"Aren't cattle part of movable property?" the storekeeper asked.

"Of course," said the bailiff.

The town-crier had come back and the storekeeper asked him to bring the cattle that were grazing on the slopes of the hillock. To pack the sundry vessels, the storekeeper went into the pantry and came out with an empty gunny bag. When he shook it, four or five tiny mice, new-born and still pink, fell out and wriggled in the sun. The bailiff said shh shh and the storekeeper let out a guffaw. A crow hopped in cautiously and, making a sudden lunge, flew off with one of the baby mice.

A bunch of people from Buklapura stood under the trees outside the house. They had ropes and sickles in their hand and pretended to be there in the course of routine work. None made a bid for the goods. Wasn't it sinful, thoughtsome. A few felt a tug of pity. Only a handful stayed on to see the end of the affair.

The Agent had the arecanut sacks loaded into the cart. The bailiff made out a detailed list of all the articles seized. Everything except the broomsticks, the silver picture and a couple of broken vessels was put on to the cart. Without looking at Kuppanna Bhatta, the Agent said: "Bhatta-re, no one can survive, let alone prosper, by appropriating what belongs to the deity, do you understand? From today, neither the garden nor this house is yours. The tenancy has been made over to Appanna Bhatta."

As he heaved himself up into the cart, he fired a last salvo:

"And why should you worry, come to think of it? You have sent away your pile with your wife to her place!"

PART FOUR

There was an old crone in Buklapura whose name was Sitakka. Sitakka had been married and widowed when she was still a child. She had no-one to call her own, and no-one who would put out a ball of rice in her name if she died. She lived in a dilapidated hut of her own and begged a little rice from this or that neighbour for boiling gruel for herself once a day. She owned a tongue whose sharpness was the dread of the Brahmin street. If the shadow of a lower caste person fell across her path, if children at play brushed past her, if she caught any householders stepping back into their home for the reason that the sight of a widow was a bad omen, outpoured a stream of imprecations. She found no peace if she did not spend a couple of hours a day ranting against someone. She probably thought that unless she picked up some quarrel or other and invoked one's forefathers for several generations and deplored the decline of the times, people would take her for granted. Afraid of her invective people gave her rice even before she asked for it. After her single meal of the day in the afternoon, she sat either on the stone steps of the river or on the platform outside the temple, turning cotton into wicks. No one knew how old she was. She seemed to have been there from the beginning of time. There was no person whom she did not address in the singular.

Sitakka's ears straightened at the sound of the town-crier's drum. After the prescribed three dips in the river, she had a quick meal and went out to collect the news. None of the women could tell her what had happened. The Brahmin street seemed to have been emptied of all men. Finally she got the facts from a farm-hand. She strode into Kuppanna Bhatta's courtyard.

Kuppanna Bhatta sat in the sun, with his head bare and his elbows resting on his knees. Around him, helter-skelter, were old broomsticks and a couple of untinned vessels which had long ago lost their shape. The silence was broken by Sitakka's outburst:

"Which whoreson has ruined your home? Let his own home crumble. Let his cattle be seized by tigers. What has happened to you that you mope this way? Well, well! Have you too begun to believe that a poor man who loses his temper loses his teeth? What happened to your famous arrogance, your insolence? Had you ever cared to talk to me and ask me whether I was alive or dead?"

Kuppanna Bhatta made no reply and that puzzled Sitakka.

"Let the fire swallow your enemy... And who is it that lurks there like a ghost?"

Someone stood under a nearby tree. Sitakka crossed over to the door. It was a young man, not unfamiliar to her, and she called him by name. He walked up with hesitant step.

The two of them took hold of Kuppanna Bhatta and dragged him into the shade of the gallery. The young man disappeared before he was pressed into any other errand.

Sitakka cursed Appanna Bhatta, the Agent, Kuppanna Bhatta, other sundry Brahmins of Buklapura and everyone she could think of. Then she gathered and arranged the pots and pans which had been strewn around. She saw the lock on the door of the store and heartily wished that a snake might bite the hand of the man that had put it there. She sped to her own house but not before standing in front of Appanna Bhatta's home and showering curses on his heartlessness. She returned with a quantity of pounded rice on which she had poured some curds and a pinch of salt and a crushed green chilli, all of which she had cadged. She wrapped it in a banana leaf which she pushed in front of Kuppanna Bhatta, saying, "Eat this. Don't starve like an idiot." After that she went back to her home, bathed again and lay herself down on the bare floor.

PART FIVE

After sundown, Appanna Bhatta called one of his barn-hands and said: "Go and see what Kuppanna Bhatta is doing—whether he is there or has slunk away to his wife's place. Be careful not to be seen." The servant did as he was told. He felt no little disquiet to find Kuppanna Bhatta sitting unmoving in the moonlight. Appanna Bhatta said to his wife: "Aha, what a trickster! Do you know the drama he put on for the benefit of the Agent of the monastery? My name is not Appanna Bhatta if he does not creep to his wife's home by the first faint light of day."

The next day dawned. Appanna Bhatta was curious to see what his antagonist was doing. Picking up the key that had been given to him by the Agent, he ventured out. As he neared Kuppanna Bhatta's house, he lingered for a while behind a large tree, pretending to clear a thorny plant.

Kuppanna Bhatta sat like a stone on the gallery amidst the broken vessels, his dark form leaning against the wall, a piece of cloth over his head. Appanna Bhatta missed a heart-beat. He stepped nearer, rehearsing some verbal darts in case Kuppanna Bhatta should pick up a quarrel. He decided to ask him, as a clincher, whether he had moved all his valuables to his in-laws'. He climbed the steps. A grey dog sat gazing intently at Kuppanna Bhatta. There was the banana leaf in front of him with the small heap of dried-up pounded rice on it. Breaking the thick silence, Appanna Bhatta called out: "Bhatta-re." There was no reply. With a shaking finger he jabbed at the figure which sat with eyes closed.

Kuppanna Bhatta's aged face was wan, drained of all blood. He opened his eyes after Appanna Bhatta shook him by the shoulder.

"You need not have been so brusque with the Agent," he said.

There was no reaction. But Kuppanna Bhatta's eyes were open. Appanna Bhatta felt emboldened.

"What do you lack, Kuppanna Bhatta? You have pursued your hatred till the last. But I don't hold it against you. After all, you are older to me. As an elder you must wish me well. I do not want you to leave with hard feelings against me. I shall send you to your brother-in-law's house in my own cart. Let us bury our enmity of thirty years."

Appanna Bhatta had not meant to go so far. But one word had led on to another without his realising it. Kuppanna Bhatta's continued silence had also made him raise his own voice. But it appeared as though they did not penetrate the other man's eardrums. Not a muscle on Kuppanna Bhatta's face seemed to move. His stillness hit Appanna Bhatta with the force of a blow on the face. After recovering, Appanna Bhatta started again, in a lower voice this time, and he began to pace up and down the courtyard:

"Let me assure you, my dear man, that I haven't done anything to ruin you. For thirty years I have borne your resentment. But did I ever try to strive with you? It is true that the Agent has entrusted the monastery's interest to me. You have not paid what you owe to the deity. May my tongue split into two if I am not speaking the truth. Call the elders of Buklapura and let them adjudicate. If their verdict goes against me I shall fall at your feet. Last year you took away all those who used to supply arecanut to me. When you had money to trade, was it right to default on your payments of rent? Aren't there some rules in such matters? Like you I am a man with a family. Like you I have a daughter to marry off. I have my troubles too. For a year I have been tormented by a pain in my stomach. My buffalo, which gave a pailful of milk, died all of a sudden. We are all subject to what is ordained. Get up and come with me. Have a meal at my place. I shall have the bullock-cart ready and you can start for your brother-in-law's place in the cool hours of the evening."

The grey mongrel looked at Kuppanna Bhatta's face, then at Appanna Bhatta's and then at the pounded rice on the banana leaf. Kuppanna Bhatta's eyes gazed vacantly beyond Appanna Bhatta and in the direction of the forest. Appanna Bhatta felt his throat go dry in the oppressive silence. Even as the names of ancestors are repeated at the time of a death anniversary Appanna Bhatta went on repeating the name of the other man. The dog rose, stretched its limbs, and lay down again. Mango-gnats hovered around. The sunlight scorched. Kuppanna Bhatta sat on his haunches, resting his head on his palm and his elbow on his knees, with a towel over his head. Appanna Bhatta looked at him again. The truth dawned on him for the first time, and there was a turning feeling in his stomach. The pounded rice on the banana leaf was dry, though it had once been soaked in curds. Flies sat on it. Flies sat on Kuppanna Bhatta's nose. Once in a few seconds his eyes blinked.

"Bhatta-re; I don't want your property. Stay on in your house. I shall let you cultivate this garden as long as you live. Pay me the rent regularly every year. I am not a butcher. Like you I came up from the coast with an empty cup in my hand. All I want is that I should not drop dead in a jungle path as my father did. When he died there was no one to pour a spoonful of water down his throat. And when I found him, crows were pecking at him. I want to avoid that kind of end for myself. Here, take your keys, keep them."

Appanna Bhatta's words trailed off into silence. He wiped the end of his nose.

The man who sat on his haunches as if waiting only to breathe his last breath showed no reaction even to this. The still man's shrouded frame seemed to drill into Appanna Bhatta's eyes. His tongue, never wanting in fluency, grew still too. He covered his head with the towel that had been on his shoulder and sat on his haunches opposite the still man on the gallery.

Translated from the Kannada by
H.Y. Sharada Prasad

Karl, the Darkie's Box

Ramakant

We used to call Karl Nelson, Carlo and he was pleased at our addressing him in this typical Indian fashion.

To his delectation, we used to remind him that Carlo was a Buddhist temple high up in the mountains. Or his name could also be associated with Kali, one of our Indian goddesses. Or it could be plain Kale or Kalu which are very common names in our country.

Greatly amused, Karl would give a hearty laugh.

"Call me by any name," he would reply good-humouredly, "so long as you do not offend your gods and goddesses. I hear most of your gods and goddesses are dark."

Karl, who hailed from Natal had come to India to pursue his studies here. The White government of South Africa would not have permitted him to come to India and the doors of the Johannesburg and Durban universities were closed upon him. The blacks were debarred from studying in these universities. He could enter some other universities but there he was handicapped by the fact that the range of subject taught by them was limited. For instance, here he could not study the history of his own country, the syllabi being drawn up by the Whites. To overcome this difficulty he ran away to Nigeria where his ancestors originally belonged and which country had now gained independence. As a citizen of Nigeria he had come to India on a government stipend to pursue his studies.

I had been waiting in the university canteen for a vacant seat. All the tables were occupied. At last as I spotted an empty chair I made a dash for it and found Karl Nelson ensconsed in one of the chairs, a glass of water resting on the table in front of him.

The glass reminded me that I was feeling terribly thirsty. "May I with your permission?" I said pointing towards the glass.

"Sure, sure," he said and took his hand to his forehead in a gesture of greeting.

I lifted the glass and quaffed off its contents in one gulp. I put down the empty glass on the table and without thanking him looked around for the bearer. I was still feeling thirsty.

"Want more water?" he asked.

"Yes, I had to make a dash for a bus and it is so hot outside. Here winter starts in October but if the sun is bright the day starts warming up from the very morning."

"The bearers take a long time coming to us."

"Yes, there are only two bearers and they have to attend to thirty-forty tables."

Suddenly he picked up the empty glass from the table and rose from his chair. "You don't mind if I fetch water for you?" he asked.

"Oh, no, please don't bother. I can fetch it myself."

"Please let me. It'll be a pleasure."

"You must also be feeling thirsty."

"We come from a hot country—hotter than yours. We are inured against thirst. Those who cannot stand it must be a different lot."

Picking up the glass he proceeded towards the water cooler.

This was my first meeting with Karl Nelson.

The International Students Hostel was situated at the end of the Mall Square. In the day the hostel put on a deserted appearance but in the evening one could see a lot of movement behind the glass screen of the portico. A long green ping-pong table rested at one end of the hall, its green colour merging with the outside greenery. The table was in use all the time. Outside, the badminton court also remained crowded. One could often hear jazz and rock music playing on discs, their sound wafting out of the hall.

Till now I had been passing by the hostel without any interest in it. I had not known Karl. But I knew he must be somewhere there, among other students, playing with them, talking with them, or just poring over a book in his room.

Now I often chanced upon him in the canteen where we went along with our companions. Throwing a cursory 'hello' we would exchange a remark or two. Karl's companions were mostly foreign students, one of them an Algerian girl.

One evening we had gone to the canteen alone and were sitting at separate tables. Karl exchanged a glance or two with me and looked away. I went over to his table. "Waiting for friends?" I asked him.

"No, I have come alone this evening. Won't you sit down? They must be attending their classes. Or maybe they have gone somewhere. Even if they were with me you would have been welcome all the same. I see you've also come alone."

"Yes," I said occupying the chair across from him. We had not placed our orders and were waiting to catch the bearer's eye.

The same long wait. The bearer would turn in our direction, make a polite gesture and then drift away. The crowd was increasing and with it our impatience.

"Why not come to our hostel?" Karl said. "We have a nice canteen and it is not crowded."

I accepted his offer and got up to go with him. But we did not go to the International hostel canteen. We went to Karl's room instead. He put on his heater and boiled something that tasted like coco.

"It tastes like coco," I said.

Karl's thick lips spread in a wide smile.

"Why do you laugh?"

"You are a funny man. What you're drinking is nothing but coco."

This time it was my turn to smile.

"But it tastes slightly different," I said.

"Yes, because we prepare it in a different way."

"You people don't drink tea?"

"Yes, we do. When we can get it. I mean in Nigeria it is not as cheap as in India. There it is considered a luxury."

"I thought you would offer me something typical of your country."

Karl turned grave.

"They grow coco in abundance in our country," he said taking a sip of the beverage. "It is our national food and a popular beverage."

"But I don't think it is Nigerian coco," I said. I had read the label of the package lying on the table.

"It could be any coco—Nigerian, Javanese or from Malaya or Latin America. A produce of any country for that matter and it makes hardly any difference. It is our national product and yet not our own. It is the label that tells—a label of some foreign distributing agency. Have you read *Cry, The Beloved Country*? The wise men of our country teach our children not to be too much in love with the soil of our country, our mountains, the sun rising or setting behind them, its scintillating beauty. Don't be in love with its clouds and its rainbows. For, although they are yours yet they are not yours."

I felt sorry for Karl. Perhaps I had unwittingly touched him in a raw spot. I should have been careful. But how could I know that this would cause him pain?

We had finished our coco and had put away our empty glasses on the side-table. He got up to wash the glasses.

"Leave it to me. I'll wash them," I said.

Karl gave me an intense look and then grinned. "We hate anybody putting a salve on our wounds," he said.

I gave him a bewildered look. "Why don't you give others a chance," I said.

Perhaps the sharpness of my thought was also reflected in my voice.

He put down his glass on the side-table and sat down again.

"I'm sorry, we have become what we are. But we are not to blame for it. People want to treat us like slaves but they refuse to accept our services as friends. They don't want us to have the pleasure of that kind of feeling..."

I made no comment. He got up and rinsed the glasses in the wash basin and after putting them away again sat down by my side.

There was a knock at the door. It was closed but not bolted from inside. Before Karl could get up, the Algerian girl whom I had often seen with him came in.

"What are you doing here?" she fired the question at Karl. "All of Africa is looking for you." Then she became aware of my presence and felt embarrassed at her impromptu manner.

"She's Zora, from Algeria," Karl introduced her to me in a forthright manner. "What she means is that all the students from Africa are looking for me. This is Mr. Vas. I can't pronounce his full name so easily."

"Shrinivas," I said.

"Namaste," Zora greeted me in Indian style by joining together her hands. She spoke French with the same facility with which we spoke English. On coming to India she had started learning Hindi. Karl told me that she was making a special study of Indian social customs and the problems of integration and all that. He again turned to Zora, "Zora, why are they looking for me?" he asked.

"Don't you remember it's Wednesday, the day of our weekly meeting?"

"Yes, yes, I do remember. I was shortly going to join you after saying good-bye to Mr. Vas."

"You may also join us, if you wish to," Zora said. "We hold open discussions. There's nothing hush-hush about them."

I declined her offer for I had to go home. Karl came to the door to see me off. Perhaps I should not have refused their invitation. They might have felt bad about it. I wanted to speak to Karl about it but he seemed to be in a hurry to go. He had closed the door after going into his room. I lingered outside till I heard the latch clicking shut. Karl or Zora had put on a fast paced cassette of African music. There was no point in my staying there any longer.

Contrary to what I had thought there was nothing between Zora and Karl. A week later I ran into Karl as he was rushing away from his Department. Zora was with him. I had not met them since my last encounter with them. Karl looked sad and tired. When I apologised to him for having declined his offer he gave me a quizzical look. "It was not necessary," Zora chipped in. "We had forgotten all about it. You have no reason to feel bad about it." Karl gave a faint smile. "You Indians are a strange lot," he remarked. "We don't have such near and distant relations with any other country."

I was in no mood to enter into any controversy with him. Zora appeared to be in a quandary. She was looking so slick and smart in her jeans and inter-woven rope sandals. She was wearing a musky perfume. We were walking along the path leading from the Science College towards the School of Sociology. In the triangular park where three paths met they were selling soft drinks at the ice-cream parlour. Selecting our favourite drinks we sat down in the park. Zora had paid the bill. She had in fact insisted telling us that she had received her stipend that very morning.

Karl seemed to be in a fighting mood. He quickly finished his drink and carelessly threw the bottle in the park. It occurred to me that it was incumbent upon us to have a wordy war without which our friendship would not be cemented.

I said, "I have not been able to understand what you mean by near and distant relations?"

Suddenly his belligerent mood vanished and he became thoughtful.

"It's unfortunate that we can't get work in your country," he said.

"It applies to us as well." I said. "I myself don't know what kind of fate awaits me on completing my education."

"I sympathise with you," he said. "It's not a question of dearth of jobs, but could I get a job if there were jobs going? That's the point."

"How is it relevant to your first observation?"

"My answer is both yes and no. You are closest to us in matters of international policies. Your government and all political parties support us in our struggle for freedom. They argue on our behalf at all political fora. But as social beings you are far from us. We can't get assimilated in your society and if there are jobs available we don't benefit from them. Europe wants to keep us enslaved but there we do not suffer from a sense of social isolation; we don't feel that social distance between man and man. And we can get work there—what kind of work, is beside the point."

I could do nothing but look at him in surprise.

"Do you always remain tense like this?" I asked him.

"Perhaps you don't understand the meaning of living under tension," he said as he looked at the sky through the large aperture made by the university building and the grove of trees.

"Please don't take him amiss," Zora said. She had finished only half her bottle and was toying with the straw inserted in its mouth. "Karl is worrid," she said.

"I'm just curious..." I said.

"Do you know there has been an armed revolution in his country," she said, interrupting me. "The democratic form of government has been overthrown and armed dictatorship has taken over."

"It no longer makes news," I said. "But we are still amazed at this sort of happening. Why should it happen all over Africa? Is it the result of tribal feuds?"

Karl's expression hardened. His eyes blazed as if they were going to spurt out lava. But the crisis soon passed and he became his normal self again. His white teeth flashed like a streak of lightning as he broke into a smile. And then the same sense of sadness took over.

"What you know about Africa is coloured by the Outlander's tyranny. Cecil Rhodes, Botha and the likes of Smuts—they established the Whiteman's rule in Africa. It was a misnomer to call Africa the Dark Continent for at that time it was actually steeped in brightness. We were a happy lot and lived our lives in our own way and not in servility. It became a Dark Continent only with the coming of the whiteman when our light was snatched away from us."

I heard him in silence as if in a daze.

Karl continued: "The tribes living in the forests of Africa had their own distinct identities. They did not carry on internecine wars as given out by the protogonists of the whiteman. They did not plunder one another or steal weapons. They jointly used their pastures, agricultural lands and hunting grounds on a basis of give-and-take to mutual benefit. Surely, you know something of your tribes. Before being civilized did they do nothing else but fight among themselves? Perhaps we can understand them much better than you do. They lived in great amity. To fight for narrow selfish interests is perhaps the hall-mark of civilization."

"Then why all these upheavals?"

"Our country has become the playground of great powers. They must have pawns. And if they don't have them ready at hand they must create them. These powers fight among themselves to usurp our wealth." Karl suddenly fell silent as if he was lost somewhere.

The evening was descending and it was time for us to return. While getting up I said to Karl, "Good, that you are here. You are atleast safe and secure for the time being."

Karl was silent. He sat there looking listless and sad. Seeing him sitting in that state, Zora again sat down by his side.

"I fear you are wrong in your thinking," she said to me. "They can recall him and put him behind bars. They can even shoot him."

"And if he refuses to go?"

"He has to go. His passport will be invalidated. His stipend will be stopped. After the Shah was gone didn't the Iranian students meet a similar fate under Khomeini's regime? We can be sacrificed at the altar of politics any time."

I drew closer to Karl as if I and Zora could save him from his impending doom. We sat silent, I don't know for how long. Suddenly Karl got up and walked away at a fast pace like a sleeping giant towards his hostel. We did not have the courage to follow him or call after him. We just sat there watching the darkness descending upon us. After a while we got up and started walking. Although absent, Karl seemed to be walking with us. We did not go to his hostel. We knew he wouldn't be there at that time. Even if he had been in his hostel we wouldn't have looked him up.

We did not see Karl in the university for many days, nor did we come across him in the canteen which he visited so often. I met Zora a week later, on a Wednesday when she was going to the African students meeting after attending her classes.

"May I accompany you, Zora?" I asked her.

"You are welcome." She smiled. "Sometimes your students union people come to our meetings."

I fell in step with her.

Many African students were present at the meeting, laughing, smiling, full of life and exuding a spirit of rebellion. Karl was also present there, looking his normal, cheerful self. He acknowledged my presence with a faint smile and an imperceptible nod of his head.

Zora had brought with her a small tabloid journal in English which was published from Tanzania. Its front page carried a portrait of Nelson Mandela who had been rotting in African jails for years. Alongside his portrait there was some news about the revolutionary movement and oppression by the foreign rulers and cruelty being inflicted on the freedom fighters. The doings of the puppet governments in other countries also figured in the journal all of which Zora systematically read out to her audience. When she had finished, another student named Tambe who was from Zimbabwe and was the Secretary of the group reviewed the general situation in Africa on the basis of these news items. I had seen Tambe and some other African students sitting with Karl in the canteen. The proceedings over, mugs full of some kind of drink were passed round among the audience. I went over to Karl who was sitting with Tambe and some other students from Kenya with whose names I was not familiar.

"That day you wanted to sample a typical African drink," Karl said. "Well, here you are! Have a go at it."

"What do they call it?"

"You may call it Swahili cocktail or punch. Just as the Swahili language is an amalgam of many African languages similarly this drink is a mixture of many ingredients. But it is laced with only one hard liquor—rum.. We don't believe in cheap drinks." He smiled and looked at Tambe for confirmation.

Tambe broke into a grin. "Nor do people in my country," he rejoined. "American negro militants are very fond of this drink. They call it a special African drink."

They put on a cassette in which the sounds of castinets rose above the music, punctuated with the staccato sound of clashing metal rods. Some people still glued to their seats beat their feet and swayed their waists as though they were trying to fly into the sky. Somewhere the waves were lapping against some invisible shore. There is rhythmic movement in African songs—and power and agility.

"In Tanzania we have a fisherman's love song generally sung on moonlit nights," another African student said. "Can you believe it that we too have moonlit nights and we too are capable of loving? But the Whiteman won't believe us."

We kept chatting. The Kenyan punch was nice on the tongue but heady. I felt just fine. "Your speech was interesting," I told Tambe. "But there's one question none of you cares to answer."

"What question?"

"The Pretorian government maintains that there is no oppression against the blacks. If there was oppression why would more and more blacks go there in search of jobs?"

Tambe suddenly turned grave and Karl winced as if someone had pricked his skin with a needle.

"I am sure you don't lay any store by this falsehood."

"I only want to know the truth."

"All cattle reach the *marrah* (pasture) of their own accord," the Kenyan muttered.

"Yes, that's the bare truth. Our Kenyan friend is right."

"I don't understand you."

"You'll never understand. No one can understand unless he's an African. Marrah is a great grassland of Kenya. Its lakes are infested with alligators and its jungles with wolves. But even so all sorts of cattle go there is search of water and fodder. But there is only one difference. The law of the jungle is better than the law of man. There is no malice in the animals living in the jungle. They kill only to eat and survive. Not for gain or aggrandisement."

It was Tambe speaking. His eyes had turned red, though a smile still lurked on his lips. More African students had gathered round us.

"They did not come on their own into all the wealth of Africa. All those gold and diamond mines and all those precious stones that lie scattered in the islands of the Atlantic they had exploited them with our help. Like all exploiters they were shrewd and cunning. Before the Boer War, when they stood in need of our help they gave us the right to property. We were allowed to own lands and farms. But once we became redundant to their needs we were deprived of those rights. Now they throw crumbs at us from our own table in the form of high wages. They do so, not out of compassion but to entice more and more Africans to come and work for them. We look wistfully at the earth which every day yields new treasures for them. By creating conditions of want and creating famines and epidemics and those devastating fires which end in mass annihilation they know how to achieve their nefarious ends. They know how to devour us and their methods are more horrifying than those of the pythons and wild animals of the Congo Forest..."

The cassette was now playing a song at a fast tempo. Zora came and again filled my mug.

"In South Africa they call it Danderstramm," Karl said.

"You mean this drink?"

"No, no the song that is being played now. It has a deep significance. It is the English equivalent of thunderstorm which carries everything in its sweep, leaving only devastation behind. And the mist that blows like a tornado from the direction of the Atlantic in which one can't see anything even in the daytime. But there is no song named after this mist. If there were one it would have been very dear to our Whiteman. Because he refuses to see anything even in broad daylight."

Karl held my hand and led me out. "Can you meet me tomorrow or the day after in my hostel?" he asked me stopping outside his hostel. "I could ask you even today but it's rather late for it now. I need your help."

I gave him my word that I would meet him the next day and he turned towards the hostel gate. His arm was around Zora's waist. I felt he would fall without that tall girl's support.

I could not keep my word and called at his hostel three days later. I expected Zora would be there with him. But he was standing alone in the lounge bouncing a ball on the ping-pong table. Seeing me coming, he put the racket on the table and advanced towards me.

"I was expecting you yesterday and the day before too," he said. There was no anger or rancour in his voice.

"I'm sorry, we were having the annual stock-taking at the stores where I'm doing a part-time job. I couldn't come to the university either."

We kept walking without any thought as to where we were going. Walking across the lawn we sat down on a stone bench. In the declining sun the grass and the flowers looked so sun-washed and fresh. He carefully fixed a cigarette in his plastic holder and blew out smoke thoughtfully. It seemed he didn't want to speak.

"I'm sorry I couldn't come earlier," I repeated to reassure him.

"I wasn't thinking of that. I was looking at the grass."

"It's known as English grass although originally it came from Australia."

"Call it what you like. But anything that grows on your soil is yours. For instance, potatoes, tobacco..."

"Of course, you are right. I believe you have called me for some specific purpose."

"Yes, I've to do some shopping."

"Oh, I see. So they have restored your scholarship?"

"No, I've taken a loan from Zora. Like every woman in the world she is stingy but like every woman she comes to your rescue in time of need."

"Are you saying this just to flatter her?" I laughed.

"No, I mean it. You can repeat my words to her without any fear."

"Then what are we doing here? Let's go or we shall be late."

"I'm waiting for Zora. Let her come."

"Does she know we are sitting here?"

"Oh, don't worry. She has an uncanny sense—like a cat. She'll find us out."

I gave him a questioning look. "Have you been quarrelling?" I asked.

Karl laughed. "When we quarrel we don't call the woman a cat. We don't call her a slut or a bitch either. We don't have such concepts."

"What do you call her then?"

"Nothing. We just stop meeting each other. But if it comes to that we have a brief scuffle and there the matter ends. Negro women are physically quite strong. They can give blow for blow."

Karl was right about Zora. She tracked us down. We boarded a bus.

I didn't enquire of Karl what he wanted to buy. On getting down from the bus he told me that he wanted to buy a suitcase—a box as he called it.

"A leather box?"

"Yes, a big, beautiful leather box. I want to buy it for my mother."

"For your mother?"

"Yes, for my mother. She has been wanting to buy one for a long time. You know the Whiteman for whom she worked gave her a beating by way of punishment just for touching his leather box. I was a small child at that time. I felt like sucking that Whiteman's blood. I wished I could buy a thousand such boxes and place them at mother's feet. I couldn't do that but I could certainly smash that man's skull. Just then the padre of our parish who was wearing a black robe the colour of crow's feathers came with the white priest and apologised to mother on behalf of the Whiteman I didn't forgive him but I knew my mother had forgiven him for his misdemeanour. That was what her religion enjoined upon her."

"Aren't such boxes available in your counrty?"

"Yes, they are, and one better than the other—made from the skins of hippos, tigers, pythons, wild boars, crocodile. They sell in all the cities of South Africa—Cape Town, Pretoria, Durban, Johannesburg. But we are not allowed to visit these shopping centres and such boxes are not available in the shops in African settlements. We don't have bungalows there. Only hutments and barrack-like tenements."

We were walking along Janpath. Karl bought monkeynuts and passed on a packet to each one of us. I could see Karl's face in the glare of the street lights. It was looking sad and there were shadows of some memory in his eyes. He ran his fingers over his head and yawned.

"Once they caught me while I was strolling in a market of Cape Town." Karl said, "I was awarded a week's rigorous imprisonment. I was downright lucky. They failed to prove the charges of rioting and larceny against me. Otherwise I would have been in for months together. They are upto all sorts of tricks to keep us away from their markets."

"But you could buy a box later when you were leaving for your country. You shouldn't be in such a desperate hurry."

Karl looked at Zora. She gave an enigmatic smile. A lock of her black hair had escaped from under her flat cap and was flying in the air. Her long robe-like Algerian skirt blew up in the breeze and then stuck against her thighs.

"Surely, I could buy it later on, "Karl admitted. "But that evening when I went away from you saw my mother in dream. You know when I was escaping to Nigeria under cover of darkness she had come to the end of our settlement to see me off. Holding me against her behind a mimosa shrub she kept crying for a long time. I saw her in my dream in the same stance. I wanted to be with her. But when it is not possible to do so a gift or something will bring me closer to her. Zora can understand it. She is a woman."

We entered a brightly lit, crowded shop dealing in leather goods. It seemed to be bursting at the seams with that sort of stuff.

Seeing me with two foreigners, the man behind the counter gave me a meaningful wink by closing one eye. I caught his meaning and reddened upto my ears.

"I'm not what you take me for," I told him. "We are friends and are looking for a box."

The man behind the counter was more annoyed than embarrassed. He dumped three cheap suitcases before us.

Zora was angry. "In our country we slap a man who is discourteous to us," she said.

"Sorry madam." The salesman was visibly alarmed.

"Can you dare to behave like this with a European?"

"My mistake, madam."

"I want a big and superior type of box," Karl said, pushing away the cheap suitcases.

"The salesman selected a few good boxes and showed them to Karl. The one which Karl opted for was a glossy thing made of genuine snake skin and quite sturdy and big. It had a bright silk lining and many compartments. Zora also liked it and so did I. Karl had it packed in coloured packing paper and we came out after paying its price. It was cool outside and very pleasant. I was walking silently when Karl patted me on my back.

"Feeling embarrassed?" he asked me and laughed. Having found a thing after his own heart, his bitterness seemed to have momentarily vanished. He was not carrying his suitcase by the handle but he held it against his chest like a child.

I could not understand why he thought I should be feeling embarrassed.

"There's no need for it," he said. "Old habits die hard. You remember I had talked to you about nearness and distance. We suffer from it almost every day. In a culture generated by business and commerce a man does not behave like a man."

I was still at a loss for words. We went to an open-air restaurant where we had coffee after which Karl and Zora took leave of me and went away to their hostel.

I found Zora alone at the university. She seemed to be angry about something.

"Where's Karl?" I asked.

"Karl is an ass," she said.

"Why, what happened?"

"Under an impulse a person can behave like a fool. Specially if it is a man..." She hesitated.

"Please carry on. I'm listening."

"You have seen it yourself, the way he was carrying the box that day—hugging it against his chest like a child. He walked all the way from Janpath to the hostel carrying that box, a distance of ten kilometres if not more. He feared the box may get damaged in a crowded bus. I said we could hire a taxi or a scooter but he refused to listen to me.

Something had gone wrong with his head. He feared that an auto or a taxi could meet with an accident, the reckless manner in which those people drove. He was walking in a most outlandish manner, carefully watching each step and uttering 'sorry', 'excuse me' at every step. He was afraid lest the box should suffer a scratch or something. It was so disgusting. I left him in the middle and boarded a bus."

"You have no reason to be angry, Zora," I said. "He was only protecting his box, the one you had shelled out so much money for."

"Did he tell you that?"

"You mean he shouldn't have told me?"

"It was only between me and him. He had no business to make it public."

"Where's Karl now?"

"I don't know. I didn't care to meet him before leaving the hostel."

She walked away, her sandals making a staccato sound on the hard ground. I watched her going. Sometimes even trifles can assume great significance. I was curious to know how Karl would react to these circumstances. He must be using some special expression to mollify an angry woman. Our language had a spate of words for it. But it was their private affair and I dismissed the thought from my mind.

When we met the next time they seemed to have come to terms.

This was to be my last meeting with Karl though I was not aware of it then.

It again happened to be a Wednesday. They were proceeding towards that hall which came to be called Africa Hall on the days of their weekly meetings. Karl was looking very grave. But Zora was gloomy—more sad than grave as I could clearly see. It all seemed to be beyond my comprehension.

This time their meeting was held under a different atmosphere. No lunch was served and they did not play Danderstramm or any other music. It was a very business-like affair. Tambe took out a bunch of cyclostyled sheets and started reading from them. It was a hand-out of the African National Congress and contained news of the whiteman's oppression and the struggle being put up by the masses which news was systematically blacked out by the daily papers.

I could visualize people falling on the roads under a hail of bullets and hear the groan of innocent people being tortured in prison cells. I could also hear the groans of Karl's mother rising above the general din although I had never set eyes on her. The meeting seemed to have become surcharged as if they would burst into singing Danderstramm any moment with the force of an erupting volcano.

As we started to move out after the meeting was over, Karl suddenly came to me and held my hand.

"Perhaps you won't understand me. But I feel it is a sin to stay here any longer," he said.

"Yes, I can understand your feelings. But what you are doing here is no less significant for your country, for you and specially for your own future."

He gave a bitter laugh.

"Future! You saying this? One who is not free, does he have any future?"

"But don't you belong to another country? How are you personally concerned with what goes on in a country other than yours. How are you concerned with the Pretorian colour-war—I mean directly?"

Karl started laughing.

"I know you are telling me this as a friend," he said. "But I'm sure, you don't believe in it yourself. I know that."

Zora had gone ahead of us, talking with Tambe. The darkness had deepened and the lights of the university campus had become shadowy. Zora and Tambe stopped to enable us to catch up with them.

They seemed to have heard our talk. As we approached them, Tambe said, "This colour-war has become a part of the revolutionary war being waged all over the world. In Karl's country too—against tyranny."

Without realizing it, we found ourselves outside the gates of the International Hostel where Tambe parted from us. We entered the hostel. Zora was still a few steps ahead of us. Perhaps she wanted to keep to herself. Without exchanging a word with us she proceeded towards the women's wing of the hostel.

"See you, Zora," Karl called after her but there was no response from her. Karl took a few steps towards her and then stopped, as if undecided. It could not have been Zora's annoyance. Something else must have happened in-between of which I had obviously no inkling.

Karl took me to his room. We drank coco but unlike the other day we did not enter into any discussion. After finishing our coco I got up to wash the glasses and Karl did not object. I came back and sat down facing him.

"Vas, don't try to explain things to me," he said. "Let the facts sink into my mind on their own. My mind is quite responsive that way."

"What are you driving at?"

Karl was silent. His eyes roved over the room as if he was trying to find something for which he had to make an extra effort.

"That day I had gone with you to buy a box," he said at last.

"Yes?"

"As you know I had purchased it for my mother."

"Yes, you had told me that."

"I don't want to keep it with me."

"Why?"

"I'm in need of money."

I glanced round his room. As on other days his things were not lying scattered about. He had collected them and put them in two air-bags. He had not tied his hold-all and his things of everyday use were still lying unpacked. The box was also lying in a corner covered with the same colured packing paper.

"So you have taken a final decision?" I said. The cause of Zora's annoyance now dawned upon me. Like me perhaps she had also tried to bring him to her point of view.

"I had no other way out," he said. "This was the only line of action open to me."

"You had bought that box for your mother, hadn't you?"

"Yes, but she won't mind when she knows the reason why I had returned it or sold it off."

I couldn't say anything more. Karl was alone silent as if something was weighing on his mind.

"What have you to say to it?" he asked me.

"I think you are going a bit too far."

"But what else can I do?"

"But where's the need to do anything?"

"Can you do me a favour?"

"Why ask me alone? Our Association is behind me in this. We can surely arrange for an air-ticket for you."

The taxis had arrived to take them to the airport. Two other students had also decided to go back to Africa along with Karl. Members of the Students Union had assembled in large numbers to bid them farewell. They were carrying banners and were raising slogans.

Along with others' Karl's luggage had also been put in the dickey. There were not many things to be taken along. Karl was standing alongside the taxi holding the box he had bought the other day. It was still wrapped in the coloured packing paper.

Before getting into the taxi he turned and holding out the box before me he said, "Vas, as I had requested you, keep it safely on my behalf. I will come again. I don't know whether I'll be able to meet my mother or not. I may not be able to get there at all. But please wait for me. I'll surely come back to collect it."

"I'll wait for you, Karl. But I'm afraid my address may not hold till then. I may be in Nigeria..."

"Oh, Zora!" Quickly entrusting the box to me, Karl firmly grasped Zora's hands.

"All right, Karl, I'll keep it safely for you. I'm sure you'll return.

But..." Words seemed to have failed me.

Karl started laughing.

"And if I don't return? Perhaps that's what you wanted to say. By then its price will go up. You keep it in trust for a man who gave up his life for his people and for his country. Good-bye, my friend!"

He got into the taxi.

Translated from the Hindi by Jai Ratan

Book Reviews

Ahmadabad: Edited by George Michell and Snehal Shah; Marg Publications; 1988; Pp. 187; Rs 495.00.

This volume of *Marg* pays tribute to the historical monuments and buildings of Ahmedabad, the premier city of Gujarat and, easily, one of my favourite Indian cities. An astonishingly harmonious blend of the historical and the contemporary, Ahmedabad, despite the problems of rapid urban growth, reconciles with grace and conviction, the traditional with the modern and continuity with change. Combining an old-worldly charm with the hurly-burly of a dynamic city, it is comfortable with and, indeed, even encourages these oppositions. This is the quintessential spirit of the city, and it manifests itself in many ways, but most "concretely" through its diverse architecture.

The great strength of the *Marg* volume is its marvellous collection of colour and black and white photographs. What we see is a pageant of monuments and buildings—step-wells; wooden houses; Hindu and Jain temples; and mosques and tombs, the two great icons of Islamic art. The Islamic monuments, which are dealt with at great length, include the magnificent Jami Masjid built by Ahmad Shah who founded Ahmedabad in 1411, the exquisitely decorated Qutbuddin Ahmad Shah mosque and several tombs of Muslim royalty and saints.

In most instances, the camera circles around and inside the monuments, enabling one to see them from various angles and under different conditions of light and shade. This versatile use of the camera invests the monuments with a complex identity and creates the illusion that one is exploring the physical spaces as though one were actually there. Impressive overview and close-up shots highlight several features of the monuments including the architectural medium and style, their use of space and, of course, the superb craftsmanship of the stone and wood carvers. Some photographs even suggest how some of these great buildings form a composition and merge with their sites.

Offering these photographs as "splendid images," the editors then apologize for the "less than perfect conditions" under which the photographs were taken viz. "the overcrowded streets and encroachments on the buildings." A positive, though inadvertent, spin-off of this is the intriguing overlap of time past and time present in some of the photographs. Apart from suggesting a continuum, the overlap also emphasizes that in India, the past is inescapably around and among us and that while in the West, spaces are assigned specific, mutually exclusive functions, in India spaces are used more flexibly and, in a sense, less sacrosanctly.

To illustrate: an interesting contrast is offered by a photograph of the mosque of Sayyid Alam. Over 500 years separate this distinctive mosque (which now uses tube lights and loudspeakers) from a modern, anonymous-looking residential building in the background. The historic Tin Darwaza, the great triple gateway built by Ahmad Shah and part of his original fortified city, is juxtaposed in a photograph against a trendy "gold spot" advertisement that promise the "one way to zing thing." In another photograph, an interior of Ahmad Shah's mosque also serves as a space for a beginner's class in English for young Muslim boys.

What the photographs achieve with considerable success, the supporting text accomplishes only partially. The text is most successful when it discusses the architecture in relation to its social context, analyses its utilitarian and symbolic functions and discusses how the buildings have responded to the needs of the community and the exigencies of site and region. In this sense, Snehal Shah's chapter on step-wells and Kulbhushan Jain's piece on wooden houses are easily the best. Indigenous to Gujarat, and built in response to its semi-arid climate which makes water extremely precious, are its tanks, cisterns and step-wells. In addition to storing massive quantities of water for the community at large, these complex water structures have also served as meeting and resting places. Often located near important temples, mosques and tombs, the hydraulic structures have fulfilled certain religious and ritual needs of the community by also serving as water shrines and places of worship. Snehal Shah discusses the physical and architectural features of these structures in the above socio-cultural context.

Kulbhushan Jain's discussion of Ahmedabad's domestic architecture considers the familial and cultural factors that have defined the *pols* and the wooden houses. A direct connection is thus made between the structures and the people who live in them. Built as self-contained, single-street neighbourhoods with residential units, the *pols* were protected by a gate at the entrance and a dead-end at the other extremity. Traditionally, the inhabitants of a *pol* had to belong to the same religion and caste. In the same vein, Jain analyses how the old wooden houses reflect the life styles of the occupants. Thus, both authors show a great sensitivity to how architecture reflects a society's functional, ritual and spatial concerns. Like the photographs discussed earlier, these two chapters invest the structures with a life of intriguing complexity.

The chapter on calligraphy which focuses on the inscriptions of the mosques and tombs (and some water structures), is another interesting piece of writing. Carved in relief, the inscriptions provide, among other insights, what the writer Z. A. Desai calls "the warp and woof for the fabric of the history of the last resting places of saints, monarchs, princes, princesses, the elite as well as the commoner."

In his separate chapters on the historical context and on the mosques and tombs, John Burton-Page does a sequential survey of the mainstream, political history of Gujarat, describes the different dynasties that ruled the region, the wars they waged and, of course, the monuments they built. Dynastic changes made Ahmedabad the meeting place of Hindu, Muslim and Jain architectural traditions. Burton-Page locates the mosques and tombs, historically and stylistically, within this eclectic tradition and, at the same time, points out their innovative features.

Richly descriptive in physical and structural details, the discussion of the mosques and tombs, however, lacks an important dimension: how did these monuments connect with the lives of the people who built and used them? Some details of local history and a discussion of societal concerns would have, in a sense, made the monuments more immediate. To give an example, the exquisite 1572 Sidi Said mosque with its delicately pierced window screens would have gained in "human" interest, if we had been told more about the man who had it built and the community he belonged to. It was built by Sidi Said of the Habshi community, which Burton-Page mentions but does not develop. Of African slave descent, the Habshis who were either shipwrecked or brought to Gujarat (the versions differ), were frequently employed in the armies of the chiefs of Muslim India because of their great physical prowess and ability.

Many of them, like Sidi Said, rose to high office and some became independent. Were the Habshis absorbed into the community or were they always, to some extent, outsiders? A microcosmic view of history would have certainly humanized the record of Ahmedabad's "monumental" glory.

Having said that, I would like to emphasize that the *Marg* volume, on the whole, succeeds in enriching our awareness of the architectural diversity of Ahmedabad. It does one other important thing—it also traces and discusses the unifying principles of design that govern the different traditions, the strongly regional, essentially indigenous tradition called the "Gujarat style."

Saroj Merani

Path of Fire and Light: Swami Rama; The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the USA, Pennsylvania; 1988; Pp. 226+vii; Rs 10.95.

Swami Rama is a well-known yogi, philosopher and mystic poet who is the founder and spiritual head of the Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy. "It is a non-profit organization devoted to the scientific and spiritual progress of modern humanity, by combining Western and Eastern teachings and techniques to develop educational, therapeutic, and research programs." One of the goals is to teach meditational techniques for the growth of individuals and their society, to know the harmonious view of world religions and philosophies. These programmes and seminars are designed in order that one may discover for oneself how to live more creatively. "By being aware of one's own potential and abilities, one can become a perfect citizen, help the nation, and serve humanity," says Swami Rama. This man whose life and experiences are described in the earlier well known book *Living with the Himalayan Masters* adresses himself to American audiences in a simple manner in seminars. A result of which is this practical book of Yoga with useful. information and practical advice to help guide the student toward the goal of life along 'the path of fire and light.' While this is a companion volume to the main text of volume I, which is not available to the reviewer, nevertheless it stands on its own as a simply put, yet profound work on yoga philosophy and practice. Its simplicity is the main attraction which would perhaps help the 'modern' Indian youth equally, i.e., if they even care for these approaches that have been lost or only taught in some esoteric forms that detract one from its tremendous relevance all over the world.

At any rate, the small book discusses in twelve chapters: beginning with philosophy of life, death and transition, transforming negative thought patterns, understanding the Mind and the states of Consciousness, and relationships at the 'text' level; and to the various steps in practical ways towards self-transformation by means of preparing the body and breath, the power of determination and will, the science of sound, *kundalini* and the *chakras*, and yoga nidra. That is quite a handful to deal in a simple language, but the reader must have some initial interests and have read some material to start with, or else it will sound 'otherwordly' and boring.

The book and its sayings have essentially been repeatedly stated by mystics, poets, vedantists, and traditional yoga teachers for centuries not only in India but throughout the world. It has been said time and again, in different words and ways, in accordance with the contemporary era because it needs to be restated and re-experienced over and over again. This may dismay the sceptic and materialists especially in our own era full of atheists and non-believers. After all, it negates the empericism and scientism of our own times that continues to believe in the miracles of science in its narrower definition; that the latter will provide all the clues and remedies of the universe. But the world is learning otherwise, atleast a minority as yet, beginning with fundamental scientists themselves, especially in physics, chemistry and now it is the turn of biology that is reaching the threshold of the 'mysterious unknown'. In a way reaching it in its own ways is a good thing, for each one of us the path has to be discovered anew in one's own way. The sayings of ancient seers and philosophers remain as worthwhile sayings, but will become 'real' only when practised or experienced. But, by and large these have all remained intellectualised and thereby moved away from the common masses; to whom one of few people like Swami Rama are again trying to reach since the crisis of mankind is in desperate need of disparate commitement by a key to the door that has no lock.

But will the social system allow this inner direction of 'know thyself'? From the beginnings of time this has been stated, yet today it is a great taboo in actuality since it implies the breakdown of a kind of social system which conditions—imprisons—man while talking of individual freedom. The system is living in a double-think paradigm, that says one thing and does another, quite contrary to yoga philosophy. The kind of love and relationships yoga teaches is even a greater threat, especially for a consumerist society, since it truly talks of equality, sharing of responsibilities of all of creation reflected in one's self. It disallows the game of confrontation, opposition, exploitation especially at the mental level where it all begins. The muddled-headedness, thus, is in the crossing of the wires in this unconscious brain. Few are aware of this. Only a going 'within' will clear the mess. It means giving up the essential order of a materialistic and utilitarian social system towards which even all developing nations are heading, alas, giving up their own sound ancient psyches which have expounded this philosophy long ago. Will they pay attention, soon?

There are, however, several questions that come to one's mind; namely, why is it that despite repeatedly being stated by different gurus and practical guides to reach states of self-realisation mankind is by and large caught up in self-destruction, conflict and disharmony? Perhaps there are many false gurus, and not enough disciples who are truly serious and sincere? But why is this true even in the case of a minority of the population who have various beliefs in the efficacy of yoga, *kundalini*, and the like? Is it possible that the emphasis on practice of japa, yogic mudras and asanas, only take one up to a point; and thereafter it becomes another habit and addiction of the mind towards a different kind of achievement—spiritual orientation? Maybe it is a healthier kind of habit than the various negative thoughts; but in either case the ego is strengthened, perhaps in more subtle ways unknown to the aspirant.

Finally, the important question is; who is it that aspires, desires and wants to be free and universal once again, i.e. is it not the same mind which behaves like a thief one time and at another the policeman trying to correct itself? If, on the other hand, this self is neither the body, nor the mind, or thoughts and impressions or *sanskaras*, then, that which one is, is already the universal consciousness or the witnessing consciousness which as Swami Rama says is already close to the Lord. In that case, the entity which practices, does all kinds of things to become something else is not a true entity but a false one, like a shadow which is 'normally' taken to be the substance. The error perhaps lies in this, that the seeker is itself the sought; and, until this is discovered no amount of intellectual, physical or other exercises will help since all of this only strengthens the ego, or that which is not; or that which has forgotten its true nature. No amount of dualities or dichotomies will create Oneness, for in time nothing can be achieved spiritually as time itself is an abstraction of the ego. These are thought waves that seek their own enhancement through images of the past and the future, rather than be in the *Now* which is eternal, beyond time and is the Lord itself—when I am not. I suppose the essence of the teachings is this, a Universal Truth that may be experienced any time provided the intentions are 100 per cent.

S.C. Mallik

Philosophy and Faith of Sikhism: K.S. Duggal; The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the USA, Pennsylvania; 1988; Pp. 99; Rs 7.95.

Kartar Singh Duggal is a well-known creative writer, who has received many awards for his writings in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, English. He has also served as Director of All India Radio, National Book Trust, Advisor on Information to the Planning Commission, and other public offices. He is thus best suited to write on the philosophy and faith of Sikhism especially in these troubled times when a renewed endeavour is necessary to bring back the essence of each one's religion. Ultimately, all religions teach love, service to humanity, and devotion. A reference to all this is made by Swami Rama at the outset, since Sikh religion is the latest of the great religions to emphasize this oneness within a socio-cultural framework of daily life. It being this-wordly, in it yet not of it, preaches and practises equality in the light of the underlying one Reality—well explained by the word used to identify the Divine, *Waheguru*. Its core tenets and beliefs belong to all time and are universal. Sikh religion came at a time when there was much abstract philosophizing, and emphasis on asceticism, renunciation. It was all that, which only increased the ego and created barriers not only for the aspirant who was seeking the grace of the Lord, but also perpetuated the inequalities and barbarism in society at that time. Essentially, Sikh philosophy describes the world as a means and a context for human-spiritual life, since God is both transcdental and immanent at the same time. In this way it gives more responsibility for this life, here and now, in terms of social responsibility. It is not only that it was relevant then, but in the given atmosphere of our times a resurgence of this spirit is crucial.

K.S. Duggal carries on the essence of Sikhism, so well narrated by Swami Rama, into the historical background and growth of this new religion; beginning with Guru Nanak, to the other gurus, the birth of the Khalsa, Guru-granth Sahib, and to Sikhism in modern India beginning with Maharaja Ranjit Singh's secularism, the contribution in the Freedom Struggle, to the crisis in the Punjab today, especially of Punjabi identity.

Living societies draw their sustenance from tradition for it contributes to their self-image and identity, but tradition itself is rarely static and unchanging. Alternative paths to action are generated by internal stresses and strains. Powerful impulses from outside necessitate redefinition of goals and changes in institutional instrumentalities. Indian civilisation is no exception to this general law of society. Movements of dissent, protest, and reform have played an important role in Indian society where it continues as a live tradition. Sikhism was a part of this continuous movement, which few people realize since the harmonious view of Indian culture is often emphasized. Conflict and tension is part of the growth, especially when there has been so much rigidity in social status. For example, the early Jain and Buddhist protested against a rigid religious 'great tradition' ideology and the caste system. This trend continued in later times, e.g. Mahayana Buddhism, Tantrism, Nath Panthis and the Alvars and

Adyars and also the Lingayat movements in the South.

Scholars have paid little attention so far to the social content of many of the religious movements, because often it is lack of a serious restructuring of the social content—say the notion of hierarchy—that despite great beginnings, all movements get reabsorbed into the general amorphous fabric of a 'status quo' society. The leaders of the movements fall into the economic-political setups within which they are trapped, and are fighting against. The question of identity becomes a crisis at such points of time, which today—more than ever—is a problem for entire human societies since radical transformations are taking place at all levels very rapidly. The problem is both an economic and a socio-psychological one, not merely a question of linguistic or religious identity because 'modernism' is affecting all and one, both in the East and the West. Fundamentalism, in both its good and bad forms, is a logical corollary as no new order is in sight and the loss of the old identity, so obviously seen, poses a threat to social and pyschological existences.

In retrospect, one can see that Guru Nanak conceived of equality primarily in religious terms, only partially translated into social terms. This is why later on, the stratification returns in the Sikh social order: i.e. Royalty, Sardars, rich Jagirdars, peasantry and trading communities, artisans and craftsmen, and even landless labourers and domestic servants. Is it a coincidence that without a breakthrough in the socio-economic order, after a three hundred cycle, the Nirankari movement began within Sikhism, during Sikh rule itself, as is prone to happen in a pre-industrial society? True to Sikh tradition, these questions need to be addressed today, beyond mere faith and philosophy with which there is no dispute. Too much of the normative-prescriptive ways, or of the 'golden days', seldom helps, even in a well intentioned ritual way. But what of today, when all communities face the same dilemma?

S.C. Mallik

Studies in the Ajanta Paintings: Identifications and Interpretations; Dieter Schlingloff; Ajanta Publications, Delhi; 1988; Pp. 431; Rs 550.00.

The classical style wall paintings in the numerous caves at Ajanta have attracted a large number of scholars and art historians ever since their chance discovery at the dawn of the 19th century. These studies highlight diverse aspects of this invaluable heritage. In fact, it would be hard to imagine that any aspect had been left untouched. But no! Extensive identifications and pic-

pictorial interpretations of these paintings remained to be dealt with, with a thorough scientific precision. And that is precisely what Dieter Schlingloff, the author of the volume under review, has set his aim on.

The present volume is an extension of Foucher's work of identifying and interpreting the murals, the studies presented here are intended to contribute towards a better understanding of the pictorial content in the Ajanta paintings. In addition, they are meant to indicate the place these paintings occupy in the development of Indian pictorial art, of Buddhist religion, of Indian cultural history and, of world art. The author is primarily concerned with identifying and interpreting pictorial representations based on the legendary life of the Buddha. This aspect is dealt with in the first four chapters.

The subject matter is painstakingly investigated and dealt with in twenty-four chapters. The thematic content of the paintings, i.e. the Jataka stories illustrated in them cover two-thirds of the book. In the last six chapters, an attempt has been made to bring out the significance of the pictorial content for research in the fields of religious and cultural history. These chapters will be found useful by future researchers.

It is a good thing that now more and more art historians are trying to dwell on the interrelationship between a particular school of painting and Indian poetic art. Not that this had not been done earlier. Right from the time of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, art historians and scholars have quoted verses from Jaidev's *Gita Govinda*, the Bihari *Satsai* and Keshav Das' *Rasikapriya*, among numerous other texts. But these medieval and post-medieval works influenced later schools of paintings that flourished from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Dieter Schlingloff quotes extensively from Arya Shura's Jatakamala verses to show how the Ajanta artist used them in painting, to what extent he deviated from the literal representation of his poetic model. The convention demanded that the graphic representation differ from the literal one. Numerous poetic sources are quoted by the author to prove this point. This along with the last chapter devoted to a comparative study of the narrative techniques employed by Indian and European artists make interesting reading. This chapter emphasizes the universal importance of ancient Indian painting. The problem of relationship between painting and literature extends far beyond the mere presentation of the individual characters and situations in accordance with the rules and conventions inherent in the two art forms.

The philological and scholarly references in the footnotes will be found to be useful by all interested scholars.

The earlier publications on the Ajanta paintings contain excellent reproductions of specific accidentally preserved details but do not present the reader with a comprehensive view of pictorial sequence and composition. In order to provide this kind of comprehensive view in the publication at hand, photographic representations have been completely omitted. Instead drawings of paintings and reliefs are reproduced.

It is an eminently readable book. Dieter Schlingloff has certainly broken new ground by comparing and contrasting the artistic techniques employed by Indian and European artists.

Subhashini Aryan

Alien There is None—A Collection of Poems: Motilal Jotwani; Writers Workshop, Calcutta; 1989; Rs 60.

There are innumerable descriptions and definitions of poetry. Not one of these definitions might or can be called final, comprehensive and universally accepted. Wordsworth called poetry "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling", and emotion recollected in tranquillity; Hazlitt said it was "the language of the imagination and the passions"; Coleridge described it as "the best words in the best order"; Robert Frost contented himself by saying it "may be defined as a way of remembering what it would impoverish us to forget"; T.S. Eliot preferred to call it "perfection of form united with a significance of feeling"; Auden said it was "memorable speech"; Christopher Fry said it was the "language in which man explores his own amazement"; and so on, and on.

Clive Sansom attempted to put it all together by saying that poetry "is a rhythmical form of words which expresses an imaginative-emotional-intellectual experience of the writer's, and expresses it in such a way that it creates a similar experience in the mind of his reader or listener". But he adds to this cumbersome and yet quite incomplete definition that "we find it (poetry), if we find it at all, by divination, rather than definition"; and adds that the most "successful attempt" was the schoolboy's who said simply that "poetry is the stuff that poets write". Which brings us back to the beginning of the circle!.

Leafing through Mr Jotwani's *Alien There is None*, and reading through the poems, this is the kind of musing that one is led into, primarily. There are lines such as, for instance,

'I slept with many alien lands'

which are undoubtedly of the stuff of poetry; or lines such as in the poem 'To Suzanne Belote', in which he writes:

> 'It's not that I'm not with
> you
> in your great No Nukes

campaign
undertaken at the time
when the gift of life
is in greater danger than
ever before in history.
But I'm there at the far
end of the procession
thinking on the times
when we seem to have
reached
the dead end of creativity
in us:
The situation is hopeless
and I'm a helpless
spectator.'

The poem moves slowly to the last two clinching lines, which end it in a precipitous silence. The tone of irony saves the tone of despair from becoming sentimentalist. The ironic tone can be perceived in poem after poem, as

'She has made a good
choice
Between dead wood of the
banyan
Under which no plants
grow
And green soft wood of
the pine
Which As a source of energy
is crazy...',

and, again, the curled lip in 'The Advertese':

'These days the one great
poetry I read
is in the advertese
and find
high class poets are in
PROs. ...'

It is not, of course, this kind of readable tone throughout; the eye alights just as often on lines that, for lack of the tone of irony, seem either banal, or cloying. The poem on the Niagara Falls begins, for instance, with

'The two nations shaking
hands in the Peace Bridge';

and there are others, including 'Michelangelo's Pieta', '48:84', 'To Tagore', etc.

Possibly, in some of these poems, such as in 'For Another Reason'

('The other day I found
her
to my utter pleasure
under one and the same
roof
shopping at India Tea &
Spices, Inc.,
an ethnic food store, at
Belmont.'),

what seems banality arises from the use of diction that is not selected with sufficient rigour from spoken language. There should hardly be doubt that verse in our times does and has to approximate to ordinarily spoken language and to common speech rhythms. But the poetic *charging* of words from commonly spoken language and common speech rhythms would seem to demand a certain degree of severity in selection, and in word combination, for image-making. Mr Jotwani could have spent more time on recasting else how lines such as 'Although we decide/to come out of our private hells' etc; the cliche robs the initial urge and feeling of whatever significance the poet may have perceived in his experience.

And cliches are not infrequently met with in *Alien There is None*. Sometimes, one might even stumble and stub a mental toe on bathos, some kind of anticlimax jutting in the way: for example the dreadful pun in "How much reliance/shall we place on peace/ in the Reliance World Cup?'; or the somewhat plebeian 'For sure, you no longer take delight/in the creative use of words/I have been churning/in your eyes, ears, nostrils,/mouth, midriff, navel and what have you'.

But it is perhaps silly to cavil at these negative instances in Mr Jotwani's poems. Silly, because the stones come with the fruit, which surely is nature's way! *Alien There is None* would be a useful addition to any poetry-books library.

Rakshat Puri

The Night Train at Deoli and Other Stories: Ruskin Bond; Penguin Books; Pp. 245; Rs 55.00

A new Ruskin Bond is always good news in my part of the reading world of India, and when it is a collection of short stories, it is particularly welcome. For, as he rightly says in his Introduction to *The Night Train at Deoli and Other Stories*, he is "happier being a short story writer than a novelist."

There are thirty stories in all in this collection, some old and anthologized in secondary school textbooks of stories, some new and deeply attractive for reasons better than that they are new. It is hard to believe that Bond is now 55 years old, for there is about all this writing, its nostalgia notwithstanding, a freshness, a whiff of spring in continuing youthfulness, that lifts the story out of its atmosphere of gentle melancholy, and suggests that though his yesterdays are memorable, he does still look forward to daybreak tomorrow.

One reason for this intriguing mixture of spring and autumn (when it ought at 55 to be high summer) is that Bond lives so close to nature, to trees and their seasons, to his almost Wordsworthian sense of passing clouds, hints of rain, prismatic colours in the overarching sky, falling leaves, and through them all, the sound of water, lapping or rushing.

Of these thirty stories, almost all of us must have read *The Kite Maker* with its old Mehmood and young Ali, the classic tragedy of the dragon kite that has given place to the Bombay movie, and, as so frequently with Bond, the comparison of the life of man to the life of a tree: "There is a great affinity between trees and men. We grow at much the same pace, if we are not hurt or starved or cut down. In our youth we are resplendent creatures, and in our declining years, we stoop little, we remember, we stretch our brittle limbs in the sun and then, with a sigh, we shed our last leaves."

But this is only one of several stories with trees for a *leit-motif*. There are also *The Coral Tree*, a lyric of some beauty with a girl who says 'I'm going everywhere' to remind us that there is a world outside India and Dehra Dun; *The Cherry Tree* that presents us with a portrait of the author's grandfather and himself and the special pride they take in the cherry tree's quiet persistence "because we planted it"; *My Father's Trees at Dehra*, which is a lovely, nostalgic piece about Bond's English father of whom I for one, would like to know more, and the bitter-sweetness of an affection that was originally just "natural", but that turned out in time to be "useful". Perhaps most memorable of all, because nearest us in time, is *When You Can't Climb Trees Any More* in which the author returns to his old house (that has now been sold), meets a young girl who suggests that he may wish to climb his favourite tree that he once used as a storehouse. He can't do this any more, but he sits on a garden bench with her and they talk with extraordinary ease. Then he turns and goes away and through the haze of memory "there was a spring in his step. Something cried aloud in his heart."

It is probably this many-faceted nostalgia that makes Ruskin Bond's work seem to the Indian reader of my generation, more important than it is. There is often the temptation with us to overestimate his stories, a temptation to which we willingly succumb because he writes the English language so well. He is not in this an innovator. He does not experiment with structure or even with words. Even when he is saying something dramatic he avoids the theatrical. His gift for understatement is always protectively with him. And we know why. For, added to his innate sensitivity and sensuousness, he has been for years an instinctive and habitual reader, as at home in a library as in a field.

Though clearly a loner as he wanders the foothills, takes a train to somewhere, climbs a hill, fords a river, this sympathy with living, growing things always takes in men and women, girls and boys, embodies a positive tolerance that approximates to love, and touches something deep within us that has nothing to do with passion. It is, indeed, much nearer tenderness.

As Bond observes trees with that sixth sense that has been denied to most of us, he takes trains, and invariably has an encounter that the rest of us could possibly have if we had more imagination. Ruskin Bond's train journey yields an experience that is immediately cast into a story. This is how the title story of the collection emerges, with the image of a girl that will not go away. He takes the same journey over and over again, and it is enough for him that he looks for this lost image, that is a kind of lost love, though the original has probably settled into a traditional pattern of Indian womanhood, that will not be disturbed by poetry.

Then, there is *The Woman on Platform 8*, which is another brief encounter as a schoolboy with a gentle, kindly woman who is a stranger, but assumes, as he tells his story, the contour of a foster-mother. He has just met her, been entertained by her at a railway station to tea with *samosa*s and *jalebi*s. He now returns to meet a school friend who has come accompanied by an aggressive mother. He must say goodbye, but he says it with characteristic sensitivity: "Goodbye", I said to the other woman (the gentle woman). "Goodbye—mother". And he puts his lips to her cheek and kisses her.

Finally, there are the long short stories, *Love is a Sad Song, Sita and the River* and *Bus Stop Pipalnagar*. Ruskin Bond is at his best in the short, or very short impressionistic recit such as *The Thief, The Story of Madhu* or *The Window*. But *Bus Stop for Pipalnagar* is a treasure to be re-read and remembered. Here are snatches from it with three varied characters, figures in a Chinese paintings: "London has its fog, Paris its sewers, Pipalnagar its mud." And: "One day I'll write a book," I said, "not just a thriller, but a real book about real people. Perhaps about you and me and Pipalnagar. And then we'll be famous and our troubles will be over and new troubles will begin." And "It is good for friends to help each other," said Suraj... "Will you be sorry to leave?" "Yes, I will be sorry. A part of me will still be here." Bond goes on: "It is autumn and the rains are over. The earth meets the sky in one broad, bold sweep... a land of thrusting hills. Terraced hills, wood covered and wind swept... This is the land I should write about. Pipalnagar should be forgotten. I should turn aside from it, sing instead of the splendour of exotic places. But only yesterdays are truly splendid. And there are other singers sweeter than I do sing of tomorrow. I can only write of today, of Pipalnagar where I have lived and loved."

Perhaps this is why a new collection of stories by Ruskin Bond is so welcome. For he perceives in the curious mixed tapestry of India, and Indian landscape, the place that, to the wise and the sensitive, is really home.

Muriel Wasi

Kingdom's End and Other Stories: Saadat Hasan Manto; (translated from Urdu by Khalid Hasan); Penguin Books; Rs 55.00

There are dangers in advertisement. This readable collection of

Saadat Hasan Manto's 24 stories appears with testimonials to him from Salman Rushdie: "The undisputed master of the modern short story", and Anita Desai: "...it was when his inflamed passions and emotions became tampered with a satirist's laughter and with a touch of fantasy that he reached his greatest height," both of which mislead today's reader into expecting something uniquely modern and something capable of provoking exaltation. Neither is true, for Penguin Books has itself published a collection of modern Hindi short stories. *A Death in Delhi* (1987), that are more modern than Manto, and Nirmal Verma's recent collection of stories published by Readers International, are plainly more thought-provoking and uplifting.

What, then, is it in these 24 stories that compels one to read, and to read on? What is Manto's short-story identity? He is, in the first place, a natural story teller. From the moment he begins to write, it is to tell a story, not to imply a subtlety or to communicate an idea. There are exceptions in this volume, notably *Free For All* which is a parable on the resurrected Kabir, whose legend demonstrates to both Hindu and Muslim that a seer is above sectarianism. (The legend replaces a disputed human body by a collection of perfumed flowers).

However, this is not either the best or the most typical of Manto's stories. Nor, indeed, is *Kingdom's End*, the title story. The best lie much more in the category that, in Khalid Hasan's phrase, deals with "those who lived on the fringes of society." Also, with the distinctively male story of soldiers on opposite sides of an artificially created barrier, who remain brothers, though it is their professional duty to kill each other.

Of the first category, there are splendid examples here in *The Room With the Bright Light* and *Mummy*; of the second, what seems to me to be the best and most moving story in the present collection—*The Last Salute*.

Manto's popularity with the common reader is certainly assured both by their spontaneity and the fact that he deals unequivocally and without great subtlety, with the things that attract most men and many women: sex, physical conflict and survival. His portraits of all three are simple and straightforward. He spoke his mind with vigour but without undertones and so he was, is, and always will be easily understood. This is what the common reader wants: a straight story, with conflict, an element of suspense, and a faintly ironic situation to confirm that life isn't quite what you thought it was.

The complications are not necessarily resolvable and many men and women are victims of this Stella Jackson, "Mummy", the Anglo-Indian hostess who brings girls and men together in ambiguous, but not really obscene or criminal situations, is finally charged by the police with moral turpitude and expelled from Poona. Yet Chadda, who knows her better than anyone, testifies to her "purity" and adds: "She cleansed me of my lust and meanness." Mummy has that indestructible good nature, that is attractive to Manto and that ranks higher with him than any other quality. Khalid Hasan is entirely right when he says that Manto found "prostitutes more interesting than housewives, crooks more human than civil servants". But so have a hundred others from Zola and Guy de Maupassant to Somerset Maugham. This is not a unique quality, though it is possibly rarer in India than in the Latin countries of the world and in such Anglo-Saxon fiction as *Cakes and Ale*.

Manto is a good example of a man and writer who saw all things from an uncompromisingly male point of view. In consequence, he is at his best in situations which men dominate. These do not exclude women: they merely relegate them to the status of sex objects. For though he conceded freely that women were human beings, Manto, man-like, always saw them in relation to a husband, a lover, a father or a brother. They are always more or less in need of protection, or victimised by them. This is one example of where his "modernity" suffers. Manto died in 1955, but there is no story at all in this collection that presents us with the study of a working-woman in a professional role, uncoloured by sex. There are no women-doctors, women-teachers, women-social workers, women-administrators, women-writers, women-journalists—just women as men see them.

This is surely a shortcoming, for though Manto saw his world "steadily", he can hardly be congratulated on having seen it "whole". In *The Last Salute* he is as moving as he can be, for he knows—indeed no man knew better—what two men, a Muslim and a Sikh, who have fought shoulder to shoulder in the same regiment, feel about each other when, thanks to new political boundaries, they are driven to fight against, and kill each other. One could not change a word of this story, with its heroic overtones and an irony worthy of Ambrose Bierce. Manto improves on the occasion by the use of the bawdy language of the soldiers' encounter. This more or less constant flavour of the grittiness of life, with the strong smell of Scotch—or Punjabi-broth, constitutes the identity of his best stories.

Manto's stories lend themselves well to filming and radio. I would have thought that radio is an especially good medium for such stories as *Babu Gopi Nath*, *The New Constitution* and all those written round Partition: *The Dutiful Daughter*, *The Price of Freedom*, *The Assignment*, and

The Return. Whether or not in India or Pakistan, such stories are expedient at a given moment, they reflect a truth that did not escape Manto: political freedom may be necessary, but it leaves permanently unsolved, many human problems that it set out to solve *en masse*.

Muriel Wasi

The World Elsewhere and Other Stories: Nirmal Verma; Readers International; 1988; Pp. 238; £9.95

It is a truism that the short story in Hindi has come of age. It is no longer derivative. It has no connecting thread (thank Heaven!) with O. Henry's deliberate irony or, indeed, with the more ingenious psychological, patterned story by Muriel Spark. If it is akin to any other writing in this genre, it is the French *recit* that has design but no plot, meaning but little anecdote. And, perhaps Nirmal Verma is among the best representatives of this Hindi short story that has arrived without claiming descent from some extraneous source.

The present volume consists of 12 stories of varying length, but all immediately identifiable as the work of the same author. All the stories deal with a personal relationship, generally between two people, a man and a woman, sometimes between a boy and a girl, very occasionally between an older and a younger man. Many of the stories are laid in Europe, sometimes explicitly in Czechoslovakia; sometimes by implication somewhere in Eastern Europe; one at least in London; and occasionally in India. One of the characters is always an Indian and a man, and is almost certainly autobiographical in inspiration, if not in detail. The other character, man or woman, is a foreigner, generally a European, though one at least is a West Indian and one an Indian with a pronounced European outlook.

All the stories seek to achieve, and generally succeed in creating and communicating atmosphere: it is their chief merit. There is about them all a sense of drifting through life. The characters do not seek to know quite why they do what they do, or even to feel that they need always act for a good reason. The stories are sensitively conceived and written, but because of their existential character, tend to leave one vaguely dissatisfied with their outlook on life. Among those that specially interested me as worth re-reading are: *Under Cover of Darkness; The World Elsewhere*, the title story; and *An Inch and a Half Above the Ground*.

As is not unusual with Nirmal Verma, *Under Cover of Darkness* deals with an extra-marital relationship. It is told by a young boy, with appropriate innocence, about his mother and a certain "Uncle Biren" to whom she is clearly secretly attached. The boy's narrative is gripping precisely because, though he is the official observer, he is incapable of observing or suspecting what the adult reader understands all too well. Uncle Biren is sophisticated, travelled, European in outlook and sufficiently interesting as a human being to win the boy's affection. As an Indian version of L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, the story is entirely convincing, but as it is a short story and not a novel, the boy never has the opportunity to look back and see his characters with Hartley's mature hero's eyes. If the Hindi original is as good as its English translation, it must be very good indeed, sensitive and poignant.

The title story, *The World Elsewhere* is laid in a park in London (indeed, several of Verma's stories are laid in a park where a poor young man appears to spend much of his impoverished life observing others). This story, too, has the quality of tenderness and sensibility that one comes to associate with its author's work when he deals with children, and particularly girls. The girl in the case, a West Indian, Greta, has an elfin quality. She lives in her imagination, trusts the narrator, an Indian, with the spontaneity of an elfin child, and communicates with a total lack of self-consciousness that is endearing. The relationship between Greta and the Indian (obviously Verma) is allowed to grow till he meets the girl's mother, Mrs. Parker. The slight sketch of the West Indian woman, a nurse, who has been exposed to poverty and insecurity in a foreign city and lives her life between hospital, park and her basement rooms, is strangely moving. The story rises and falls and finally fades into a last accidental meeting with Mrs. Parker who tells the Indian that Greta has gone away "to her father". Loneliness then, like an enveloping pall, invades the park to which he retreats. Greta has gone and with her, the seemingly slender, but to him, life-giving relationship.

The third story, *An Inch and a Half Above the Ground* is probably more memorable than the other two for someone who has lived through World War II. It holds the mirror up to a doddering old man whom Verma meets in a pub somewhere in Eastern Europe. Prague? The doddering old man must talk, and Verma is not unwilling to listen. So the story of the old man's life unfolds down to the death of his wife at the hands of the Gestapo. And when the Gestapo have ransacked the woman's apartment, tortured her husband for information about her that he does not have, and killed her, they leave a human wreck who wanders regularly from pub to home, home to pub. "No, you needn't see me home", he says to the sympathetic Verma. "It's not too far from here. I know my limit. Didn't I

028105

tell you—just enough to lift you an inch and a half above the ground."

One reason for the success of these stories is that they belong unequivocally to the post-war world—they are wholly modern if not strictly contemporary. The man-woman, boy-girl relationships are invariably fluid, invariably convincing. They hang on affection rather than passion. There is, it seems, dependence on, a clutching on both sides at, what is worth salvaging from a world rendered inhuman by cruelty or indifference.

Another reason why the stories compel attention is that the English translation generally stands up for itself. Rathi translates *The World Elsewhere*; Jai Ratan, *Under Cover of Darkness*; Krishna Baldev Vaid, *An Inch and a Half Above the Ground*. However good the original story in Hindi, it could not have won the wide readership that its English translation will now confer upon it. And the book is well printed and produced. These are not perhaps primary considerations in literature, but without them, we would be less willing to read it.

Muriel Wasi

Through Brown Eyes: Prafulla Mohanti; Penguin Books; 1989; Pp. 222; Rs 45.00

Three-parts of the charm of this autobiography stems from the personality of its author, which comes through inspite of the steady disenchantment he experiences about life in England between the sixties and today.

Prafulla Mohanti was a boy from a village in Orissa. As a man, he has the sweetness and simplicity, the genuine humility and reverential attitudes of an Indian from the traditional countryside. In between his childhood and early youth in Orissa, he spent some years studying architecture in Bombay. It was his first experience of a big city, but it did little to prepare him for the metropolis of London, or for the attitudes towards Indians of the average post-World War II Englishman.

To begin with, Mohanti was protected by Tom, an English friend whom he had known in Bombay, and who took him under his wing when Mohanti first arrived in England in 1960. Tom is almost as unusual for a modern Englishman as Prafulla is for a modern Indian-survivor in England. Both men are sensitive and kind, and one of them—Prafulla—is authentically creative. Presently Tom emigrated to Australia and Prafulla had to steer his course alone.

What follows is a story of challenge and frustration, punctuated by bouts of sadistic violence, but Mohanti sees himself through. He was offered, at the same time, a job as an architect by the Government of Orissa on Rs 200 a month and a place for study at the Leeds School of Town Planning. He took the latter.

The 35-page chapter on Leeds is a revelation as much for young Indians contemplating a similar course of study there today, as for those of us who lived and studied in England in the thirties of this century. For though geography fosters the illusion that the Britain of our times, and the one described by Mohanti here, are the same country, contemporary history swiftly dispels it. Politically, economically and culturally the two Britains are different countries.

The housing situation for Indians in Leeds was dismal enough when Prafulla went there, but the attitudes of the native English to brown Indian interlopers were infinitely more depressing. A sympathetic Polish teacher at Leeds told Prafulla that "people don't like new ideas in England." Mohanti was more or less always short of money, but never short of new ideas in town planning, in painting or in the integration of the creative arts. However, he did well in his first examination. "I was so happy with the results of my exams that I wanted to dance." This many-sided vitality in art is part of Mohanti's charm. He never really ceased to wish to create something beautiful that was stamped with his own individuality. On Sundays in Yorkshire, he went out with a sketch pad to Ilkley Moor where "the air was clean and fresh after the smoke of Leeds." He walked, stopping to sketch.

Through the changing tapestry of these and his later days in England, we are always conscious, as we read *Through Brown Eyes* of the gentle persistence of Prafulla's native identity. He frequently retreats from smoke, urban congestion, racial hatred and provocation into his first love which is, not town planning, but painting. This is combined with other arts—dancing, rhythmic exercises, he even teaches yoga. He remains at heart the village boy from Nanpur in Orissa, the acknowledged artist of a close-knit village community. He writes with disarming candour: "My hands have fascinated me from childhood. As I paint, write and draw, I feel they are figures with lives of their own. I use them like dancers improvising patterns of movement with a sense of rhythm coming from within myself."

Mohanti went to Leeds to study town planning and in the process became a painter. There were no suitable jobs for town planners in Leeds, so he decided to go back to London. Out of the racist frying pan into the racist fire! He lived in the East End and worked for the Greater London Council (GCL). He testifies that living in East End helped him to understand the problems of the homeless. Indeed, the book is a commentary on homelessness and its implications for human lives. "My life," he says, "fell into a routine."

The routine was not infrequently broken by thoroughly vicious attacks on him. He was abused and spat upon by white English children and teenagers; he was beaten unconscious by a white street gang. A wise Jewish friend told him that it was hard "to survive for those who are different." Mohanti, who was always "different", moved in time to Pimlico, but racial persecution followed him there.

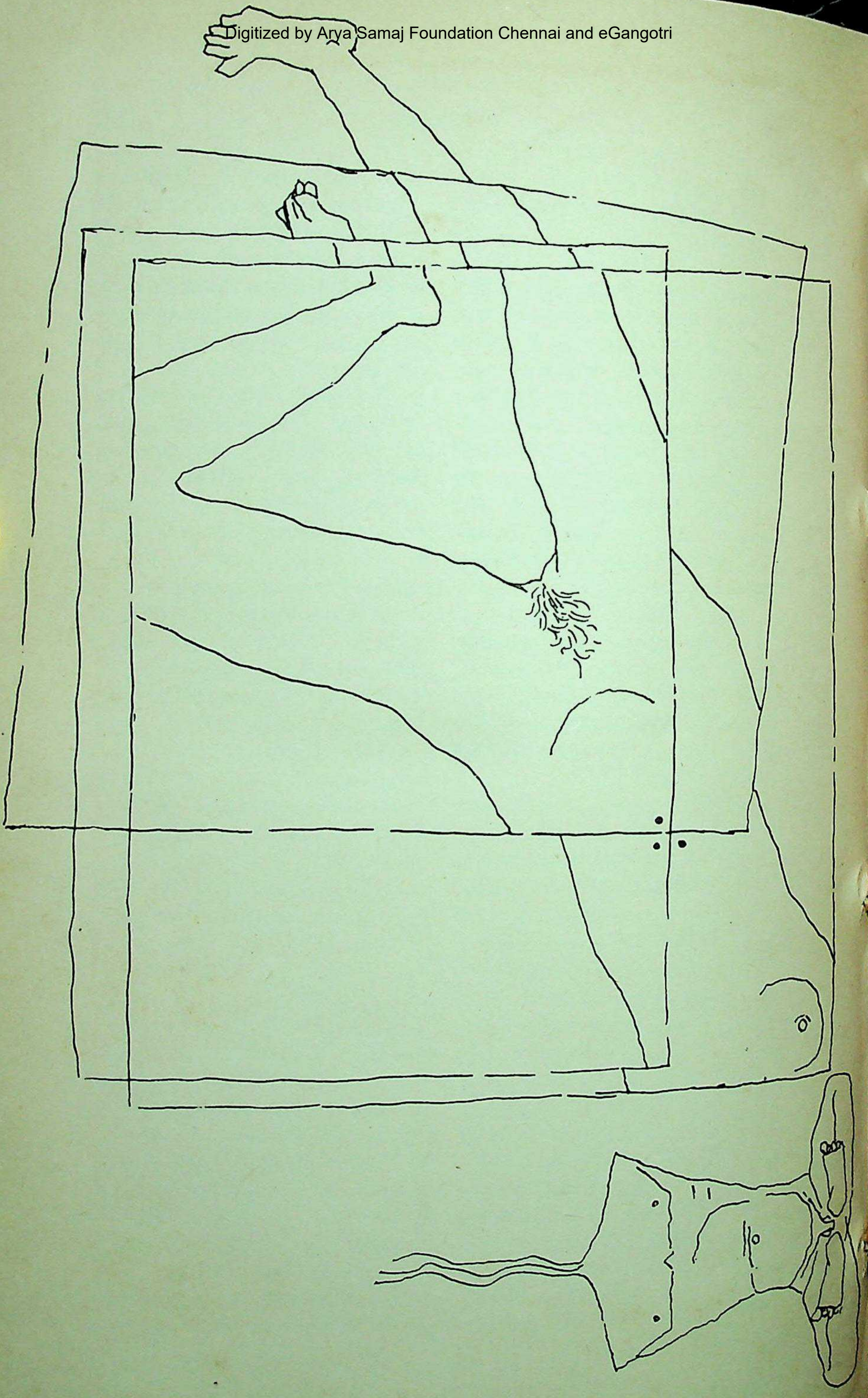
The result of all this was to turn him permanently inwards. He began to ask: "Who am I? What am I doing here?" And answered himself: "I knew I was part of my own tradition, an artist from a village."

In such a situation, the clear-eyed pragmatist sees the issues. The choice for him is between being poor, insecure but also a first-class citizen in India, or alternatively, being relatively well off, but despised, persecuted and a second-grade citizen in England. The pragmatist chooses, and accepts the consequences, no matter how unpleasant, of his choice.

Not so Prafulla, who wavers and more or less asks for trouble. He says: "I only feel at home in India and England. When I am in England, I want to go back to India and when I am in India, I want to return to England. But as soon as I arrive at London airport, I am made to feel an outsider. I have learned to live alone with myself in a dream world surrounded by violence and racial tension."

We can only hope that the artist's dream world is fortified to withstand the endemic violence of a society now patently sick and in decline.

Muriel Wasi



Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers : Regd. No. 23927/72

7/72

Compiled
1999-2000